

NEHRU LEGACY

A Symposium

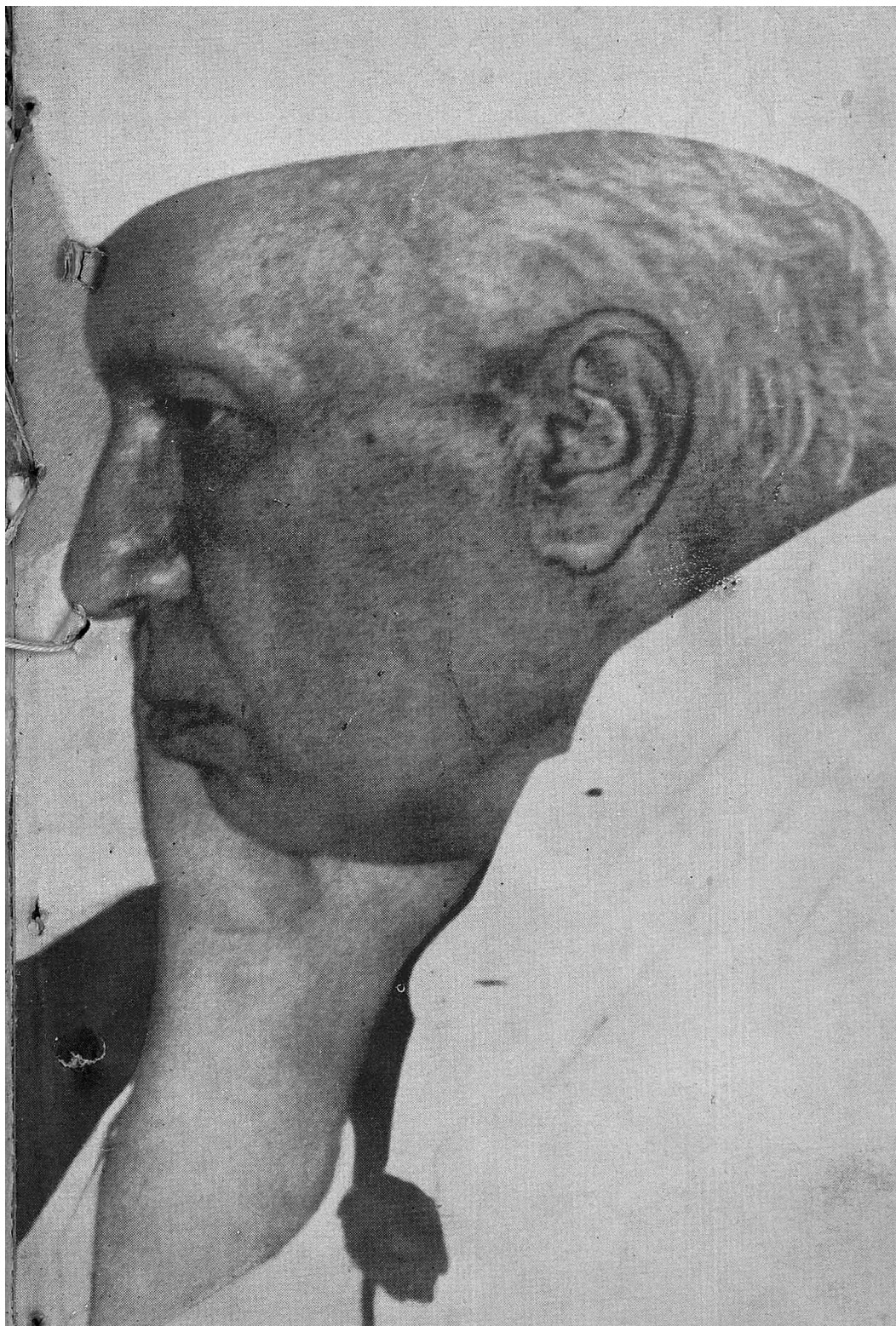
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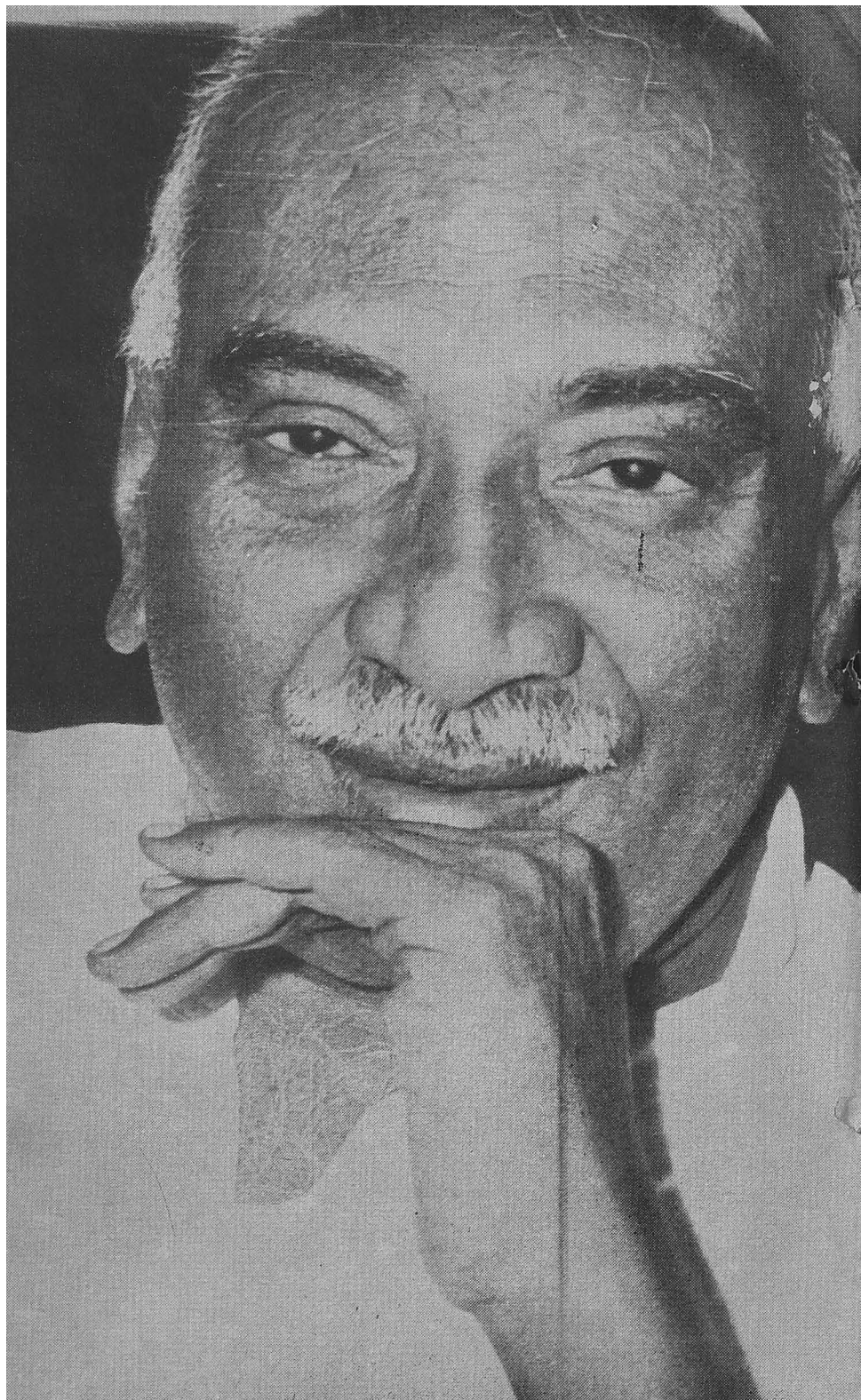


CONTENTS

1. Nation's Leader and His Legacy —K. KAMARAJ	1
2. Nehru and Indian Parliamentary Democracy —M.C. SETALVAD	14
3. Nehru and Parliament —HIREN MUKERJI	25
4. Nehru and Planning —GYAN CHAND	35
5. REMINISCENCES AND NOTES —DINESH SINGH	48
6. Nehru—the Anti Feudal Champion —BIBHUTI MISHRA	58
7. Nehru and the Press —M. CHALAPATHI RAU	72



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NATION'S LEADER AND HIS LEGACY

K. KAMARAJ

We are too close to events to be able to assess with any degree of accuracy Jawaharlal Nehru's place in modern Indian history. Nevertheless, it is clear that he has been the biggest single influence on the evolution of contemporary politico-economic thought in this country—a development which has had a major impact on progressive movements the world over in the last thirty years and more.

Jawaharlal's ideas about the future of India began to take shape clearly quite early in his life, but we of the younger generation began to be drawn towards them in the early twenties. But I cannot say that we came completely under his spell during those years. The Mahatma's grip over our imagination was too strong to permit it. I saw Mahatmaji for the first time in Madurai when I was in my teens. The *darshan* was all that was required to give shape and direction to the urges that had been growing within. I had decided much earlier that my countrymen could not hope for a decent or respectable life under alien rule, and I had in my own way become a tiny part of the revolution that had begun. I had become aware of it by listening to the powerful speeches of many of Tamilnad's great patriots of those days. Despite these circumstances, seeing Gandhiji in person and hearing him expound his down-to-earth political philosophy marked a decisive point in my life and in that of many other young men like me. Slavery ceased to be a burden to be borne with fortitude forever; the conviction took root that with such a leader at the head of the whole people the dawn of freedom could not be far away. Even the semi-religious atmosphere of his political meetings seemed natural at the time, for we found that he had hit upon the most effective mode of communication with the vast rural masses of India. The communication was direct and electrifying.

In the years that followed I—and others of my age group in Tamilnad—heard a great deal about Jawaharlal and the new

ideas he was struggling to bring into the Congress. I followed his speeches and writings and activities with great care, and felt greatly enthused, for he was expressing ideas which were simmering in young hearts all over the land. More and more many of us felt drawn towards him; we recognised in him the spearhead of youth's dissatisfaction with the slow pace of the freedom struggle, the leader of the revolt of the masses against poverty, inequality and ignorance. Deep affection for him had become part of my being long before I met him for the first time at the Madras Congress in 1927. It was little more than a brief meeting, but quite sufficient to enable me to recognise our future national leader, the man on whom Gandhiji's mantle would fall in course of time. This was despite the fact that he was at that session almost defying Gandhiji by moving the famous one line resolution on complete independence. There was not even a semblance of opposition to the resolution even from the representatives of the Old Guard present. Gandhiji did subsequently give public expression to his displeasure over Jawaharlal's haste, but obviously Bapu had recognised that the youth of the land was in no mood to be content with the step-by-step approach.

I remember how excitedly we discussed the courage with which Jawaharlal had given the call to the great leader himself. His words while moving the resolution echoed and re-echoed in the pandal: "It (the resolution) means what it says. It means complete independence. It means control over the defence forces of the country. It means control over the economic policy of the country. It means control over relations with foreign countries." And he threw a challenge to the people: "Whether we achieve it today or tomorrow, a year hence, or ten years hence I cannot say. That depends on your strength and the strength of the country."

And two years later, at Lahore, with Bapu's unqualified blessing, and under Jawaharlal's presidentship, the Congress re-affirmed its goal of complete national independence and spelt out what it meant.

Everyone who has read his *Discovery of India* and his *Autobiography* knows how Jawaharlal's ideas about the removal of social and economic inequalities took shape. I will not go into the background from which he came or his sojourn

in England when the intellectual ferment in Europe influenced him. Nor is there need to discuss here the differences he had with his illustrious father over the methods to be adopted in dealing with the British authority in India. It is enough for my purpose to point out that vague dissatisfaction with conditions in India had taken possession of him quite early in life, and he was constantly engaged in an endeavour to find the most effective means by which his countrymen could become equals of the most advanced peoples of the West with whom he had come in contact. In the course of his search he came in touch with the Mahatma who first aroused mixed feelings in him; but he soon realised that there was a leader who understood the masses of India and had the rare ability of devising methods of struggle which they in turn could understand and implement. He was not a great admirer of the moderates-ridden Congress of those days; but he also saw that Gandhiji was making the Congress the instrument of revolution, and decided that he would be part of the great national movement and attempt to give it a positive direction from within. A democrat to the core, he recognised the need to avoid random demonstrations of anger and to carry the majority with him always.

The Russian Revolution thrilled Jawaharlal as it thrilled many stalwarts of the freedom struggle. The national poets sung the praise of the revolution. I remember how enthusiastically poet Subramania Bharathi's song was sung at public meetings in Tamilnad in those days. But the more moderate leaders of the Congress were deeply perturbed by the extreme violence which had become necessary in Russia. Nevertheless, it was recognised on all hands as the common people's legitimate revolt against the established order of oppression and misrule. Jawaharlal summed up the varying reactions in India in these words: "Russia... may help us to find some solution for the great problems which face the world today. It interests us specially because conditions there have not been... very dissimilar to conditions in India. Both are vast agricultural countries with only the beginnings of industrialisation, and both have to face poverty and illiteracy. If Russia finds a satisfactory solution for these, our work in India is made easier." These words were spoken in 1927, the year in which he paid his first visit to the Soviet Union.

From the time he first came into personal contact with India's poverty and suffering at his first meeting with a group of U.P. peasants about ten years earlier, Jawaharlal had been thinking constantly of the kind of life the poverty-stricken peasants and rural workers should lead in free India in later years. He often spoke of his dreams, and there is hardly need to quote him here. In the early years, of course, Jawaharlal's thinking about the future was necessarily vague and not entirely related to the reality of India; gradually, his close and intimate association with Gandhiji made him more and more aware of the reality, and from a more or less abstract thinker he evolved into a practical leader who could recognise the limitations imposed by circumstances and at the same time maintain his idealism undimmed. Gandhiji's dream of wiping every tear from every eye, of removing all traces of poverty from the face of the land, of uplifting the backward and the downtrodden, inspired him and gave his thinking a new direction and purpose in the Indian context. He became the natural leader of the younger generation by reason of his ability to project Gandhiji's concept of swaraj into the modern context. And even as Gandhiji influenced him to take note of realities, he made Gandhiji accept modern ideas of revolution to some extent and agree to give a positive direction to the struggle for freedom.

The Karachi Resolution of the Congress may perhaps be said to mark the decisive point at which Gandhiji, and with him a substantial section of the conservative Old Guard, accepted Jawaharlal's ideas about India's economic regeneration and the establishment of political equality. The Karachi Resolution not only spelt out the fundamental rights which today we enjoy under the Indian Constitution but defined the sectors over which the State should exercise control on behalf of and in the interest of the common people. It gave a succinct outline of Congress policy on labour, taxation and expenditure, and regulation of economic and social programmes in the public interest. Jawaharlal drafted this resolution, and Gandhiji blessed it, making only a few verbal changes. The Karachi Resolution marked the beginning of the new thinking which Jawaharlal introduced into the Congress on social and economic problems. Independence was no longer a vague, undefined concept; it had become a purposeful mission whose aim was

to bring about equality of opportunity for the people, to ensure that the people through democratic means controlled key sectors of production and supply.

I have been asked what made Jawaharlal the leader of the Congress—which qualities of his, and through what contributions he made. I do not think the question can be answered briefly. That is why I have attempted in a general way to explain the role of Jawaharlal in the early years of struggle under Gandhiji's leadership. The qualities which really endeared him to the rank and file of the Congress all over the country, and made him a hero in the eyes of the nation's youth, were his sincerity, his dedication to the great cause, his impatience with the slowness of the then leadership to react to the vast changes taking place all over the world, his readiness to make any sacrifice, and his fearless and persistent efforts to convert the conservative sections of the Congress leadership to his own way of thinking. He did not believe in going it alone and fighting a frustrating battle from the wilderness. On the other hand, he believed in the possibility of changing the direction of the dynamic national movement represented by the National Congress. He symbolised not only the revolt of youth but the determination of youth to assume leadership and take the country forward to the cherished goal of a society in which equality would be a reality, of a nation which would be as great as any in the world and would serve as a model for other peoples struggling for liberation. Gandhiji, as the supreme commander of the people's struggle, was the first to see that Jawaharlal represented the forces of the future which could not be held back. And he named him his political heir.

It was Jawaharlal's emergence as the second biggest leader of the Congress that created faith among the people as a whole in the ability of the Congress to remove social and economic barriers and disparities. Even in the thirties he had begun to symbolise for the masses of our people the era of prosperity which freedom would bring in its wake. He was also the bulwark of the people against the reactionary and communal trends which had begun to show themselves in the country, and even in the Congress organisation. The people had watched him at work and had seen him succeed step by step in his efforts to introduce fresh thinking in the Congress leadership. This gave

them the confidence that so long as he was at or near the helm of the national organisation their interests would be guarded zealously and reactionary interests would not be allowed to gain the upper hand. They recognised easily enough that he did not aspire for power for its own sake, unlike many of his contemporaries.

He himself was giving more and more concrete shape to his ideas of social and economic change. The Congress set up a Planning Committee on his initiative in 1939, and he was its chairman. The war interrupted the labours of the Committee but nevertheless it was able to produce an outline of what Congress could achieve after the dawn of freedom. Even during this period it was evident that he was giving shape to his ideas of socialism in the Indian context. At the Lucknow Congress, for instance, he spoke vehemently of socialism and made it clear that there was no other way for a poor country like ours. But he shunned a dogmatic approach, and would not tie himself down to clichés and catch-phrases as some of our leftists have tended to do. His was an attempt to work out a socialist solution for India's peculiar and huge problems, learning from the West as well as from the Russian Revolution but without allowing these ideas to blind him to the actualities around him in our own country. At Lucknow he also affirmed his faith in democratic and peaceful change.

With great reluctance he agreed to the office acceptance programme which led to the formation of Congress governments in various provinces. His reluctance was due to inadequacy of powers proposed to be given to the provincial governments. He incurred the displeasure of some of the leading leftists in the Congress (it will be remembered that all leftists were part of the Congress and the national movement in that period) by accepting Gandhiji's guidance much against his own inclination. Two and a half years in office seemed to show that Jawaharlal's fears were largely justified. Bureaucratic methods tended to develop and had their effect on the Congress. Fortunately, the war intervened, and a new phase of struggle began. The communists, who took far longer than most other leftists to understand the temper of the people, quit the Congress in the wake of Russia's entry into the war on the side of the Allies. This was the first wrong step which led to many others in later

years. This was also in a sense unfortunate, for with all their faults the communists were dedicated workers who could have formed the backbone of the left wing in the Congress in the crucial years ahead.

The attitude of communists at that time saddened Jawaharlal a great deal, as did that of the leaders of the Congress Socialist Party some years later. It showed him that those fired by progressive ideologies were not necessarily realists capable of providing effective and purposeful leadership to the people. These developments also convinced him that it would be a long time before any new and strong party capable of translating his ideas into reality could take shape in the country and that he had no alternative but to make use of the Congress organisation for this purpose despite its many weaknesses. In fact, he had recognised this fact much earlier, and events only confirmed the correctness of his judgment. I recall what he said with reference to his participation in the All-India Trade Union Congress at Nagpur in 1929; "...bourgeois as the outlook of the National Congress was, it did represent the only effective revolutionary force in the country. As such, labour ought to help it and co-operate with it and influence it, keeping, however, its own identity and ideology distinct and intact."

I will not here go into details of the tortuous negotiations that preceded transfer of power or into how partition came to be accepted by the national leadership despite Gandhiji's opposition. It is enough to say, for the purpose of this assessment, that when India became independent, Jawaharlal's emergence as the unquestioned leader of the whole country, and not merely of the Congress, was part of a natural process. No other individual, with the sole exception of Gandhiji, commanded such complete affection and loyalty from the masses of India. His progressive ideas fully reflected the aspirations of the masses and his determination to translate these ideas into reality found its echo in massive popular support to him. The people were solidly with him in his antipathy to communal and reactionary forces, and this helped him in putting down communal violence in the wake of partition—this and the striving of the Mahatma.

The essential thing to remember is that when independence came he was at the helm of the Congress — the only possible instrument to bring about the changes he had dreamt of. He

realised that change in these circumstances would inevitably be a slow and difficult process, but there was no alternative. Sardar Patel, a powerful leader in his own right, was not very happy with Jawaharlal's radical ideas, and it was hardly possible for Jawaharlal to ignore the conservatives headed by the Sardar, notwithstanding all the popular support he enjoyed. This conservative opposition did lead to many inner conflicts within the Congress, and he had to adopt a middle course so long as the conservative elements had powerful leadership. Some of these clashes came into the open, too—those with Acharya Kripalani and Babu Purshottamdas Tandon are well known. These events saddened him greatly but did not shake his confidence in his ability to change the Congress gradually. He would have been far happier if the entire Congress leadership had seen the inevitability of change and had adapted itself to it in time and with good grace.

Despite these difficulties and frustrations, he went ahead with single minded purpose. The adoption of the Directive Principles of State Policy was a resounding success for his ideas. His contribution to the shaping of the Constitution itself does not have to be detailed here.

It may be mentioned that it would have been the easiest thing in the world for him to have assumed the role of a dictator. We have seen this happen in many countries, whose leaders had even less support among the people than Jawaharlal had. Even if such a course might have been somewhat difficult in 1947 it would have been quite easy in 1952. It is the biggest tribute to his abiding faith in democracy that he did not for a moment allow power to go to his head, did not consider himself the supreme leader of the people who could do as he pleased. Some among us may feel now and then that perhaps it would have been good for the country if for a time he had assumed all state power and introduced all the radical changes he wanted to. But if he had done so he would not have been Jawaharlal, for he had firm faith in democratic processes and believed only in change by consent. Those who feel impatient with the slowness of socio-economic transformation in India might perhaps do well to ponder over this aspect of his personality. Even when, after the death of Sardar Patel, he was dealing with much smaller men who represented the conservative or reactionary

wing of the Congress, he did not use the big stick which he could have done effectively. He reasoned out every step and tried at every stage to carry the majority with him. We must remember that we owe the stability of democratic institutions in this country almost entirely to this approach of his.

Even as he allowed the democratic process to be decisive in the Congress organisation, he respected the Opposition in Parliament. Constant consultation with the party at various levels was matched by the frankness with which he dealt with the opposition parties. Despite the strength of conservative opinion in the Congress, he made no secret of his broad sympathy with the parties of the left, which unfortunately were neither organised sufficiently nor possessed mature leadership to give him the support he needed to offset the influence of the right wing in the country. One has only to see how he took the country forward step-by-step—the Directive Principles, the Industrial Policy Resolution, the Avadi Resolution leading to acceptance by the country of the goal of socialism, the first steps in nationalisation, the steady and purposeful development of the public sector, the relentless battle against communal forces and in support of the secular idea — and to appreciate that he had a clearcut long term plan for the country. The left parties in the Opposition could have helped him greatly, for he accepted their bona fides and was willing to accept their support. He did need such support from both the rank and file of the Congress itself and the ranks of the leftist opposition because with the transfer of power it was inevitable that top Congressmen should begin to think more in terms of power than in terms of utilising power to serve the cause for which the Congress had always stood. In handling this tendency and putting it down, organised popular support would have been decisive. It is our misfortune that such support was not forthcoming and instead top Congressmen in most states were engaged in internecine quarrels while the leftist opposition parties were chasing shadows and getting more and more splintered in the process.

But all these tendencies could not do much harm so long as Jawaharlal was alive, for he had the massive support of the people on the one hand and could on the other keep the goal clear in the midst of all controversies. Even during his

lifetime bossist tendencies had grown and he often drew attention to them. Towards the end of his life he decided that in order to cleanse the Congress and make it effective as the instrument of national ideology, some of its top leaders would have to give up office and take up organisational work, so that mass contact could once again be restored to its all-important place and Congressmen who had lost touch with common people might go to them again. Such a step would also restore confidence in the country, as it would demonstrate that there still were Congress leaders who were not fascinated by power for its own sake, who were ready to step down to take up humbler tasks in the national interest. The plan named after me was the result of this momentous decision. If he had not died so soon after the plan was put into practice, there is no doubt that it would have had a much greater impact on the country and its progress towards the goal of socialism. His death, however, stirred new ambitions in some hearts and there was a revival of bickerings in many areas.

But one solid fact recognised by Jawaharlal remains true now as before: the Congress is the only party which can ensure progress in the country and take it forward nearer the set goal. There undoubtedly are difficulties, but these have to be overcome. Jawaharlal wanted progressive tendencies in the country to find expression on a broad basis through the Congress. Considering the present state of the many parties of the left and their continuing quarrels, it is obvious that his concept of a united, progressive Congress, working dedicatedly as the representative organisation of the masses in this country, is the only practical solution to our problems. The Congress today needs young blood to give practical shape to the ideas which Jawaharlal imparted to it.

I am not alone in thinking so, for at Bhubaneswar this line of thought found clear expression. The idea of giving up dependence on the rich for election funds and seeking small contributions from ordinary people in all walks of life first found expression there, and this was symbolic of the new approach. This proposal is now being put into practice in the context of the coming general elections. I may add that it reflects the growing desire for popular participation in the tasks of the Congress in the service of the country.

Indeed, there is no alternative to effective popular participation not only in the working of the Congress but in the functioning of the entire machinery of administration if we are to advance towards the goal of socialism which we have set before ourselves. The creation of a socialist state cannot come about in a vacuum: it needs massive participation by the people at all levels. Therefore it is necessary that the younger generation must come into the Congress in ever larger numbers; this is what Jawaharlal constantly desired and strove for. He was handicapped by the fact that many leaders of the passing generation were still alive and they would not take kindly to new ideas and young blood. Much of the drift in many of our political parties can be traced to the reluctance of the older generation of politicians to break away from the old rut and initiate debate on new ideas.

The parties of the left can help this process by adopting a constructive attitude towards the Congress and helping it in implementing even limited measures in the right direction instead of attempting the near-impossible task of replacing it. It is their awareness of the difficulties involved in finding an effective substitute for the Congress that makes some of them enter into all kinds of alliances, sometimes even with extreme rightist or communal groups and parties. I said that it is almost impossible to oust the Congress from power for many years to come; I do not say this out of arrogance born of the strength of the Congress in the State Legislatures and in the Parliament. Nor do I gloat over the shortcomings of the opposition parties and their present inability to provide an effective alternative. I am aware of the many weaknesses in the Congress today; but I also feel certain that, given wisdom and determination, those weaknesses can be removed. This calls not only for vigilance on the part of rank and file Congressmen but for a friendly though critical approach on the part of the other progressive parties and for participation by the people in the fullest sense of the term in the formulation and execution of policies and programmes.

Let me sum up what the Congress stands for today in the light of the Nehru legacy. First and foremost, the Congress stands for speedy change in the socio-economic milieu through democratic processes. This is part of Jawaharlal's behest to us, a very important part. He was mainly instrumental in shaping the democratic institutions in this country and in guiding

them to function along right lines. Recent events have shown that not all of us in this country have fully imbibed his faith in the sanctity of democratic institutions and processes. It is to be hoped that these are no more than aberrations which will pass, as many other unhealthy tendencies disappeared in the past. He has shown us that these institutions and processes can well be used to change the face of the country and to usher in a just social and economic order.

The goal he has set before us is this: The people of India must not only have political power in the abstract through the right to vote, but must have a say in the formulation and implementation of policies. Creation of a socialist state is inevitable as this is the only way to ensure justice and equality for every single citizen. But socialism in India cannot be and should not be the projection of a dogma which might have suited other countries in very different circumstances; our socialism has to be a home-grown product that arises out of the soil to meet the requirements of our people and their genius. Socialism is a dynamic concept which cannot be defined for all time; the concept will go on improving as more and more of the common people begin seriously to think of the direction in which we are going. Public ownership of the means of production must grow steadily, eliminating private monopoly and exploitation step by step. This does not mean that there will be no place for the small entrepreneur or the small private trader. The private sector will in the long run be restricted, but the only consideration in placing restrictions will be the public interest. But while we may be clear about long-term objectives, it is also necessary to be clear and precise on the short-term steps, for otherwise the people will not feel enthused about long-term plans and their faith in the future will be shaken—and this no nation can afford.

Jawaharlal's behest of non-alignment and the pursuit of peace in the international sphere must, I think, be seen as a projection of the idea of building a just economy within the country. In this small world threatened constantly by nuclear destruction, prosperity in our country cannot be brought about as an isolated phenomenon. It can only be achieved if there is peace in the world and aggressive tendencies on the part of all world powers are kept in check. Thus world peace is not only desirable in itself but is necessary even for the survival and growth

of the newly-freed and developing nations. This is how Jawaharlal looked at the picture. His concept continues to be true today and will continue to be so for a long time to come. Thus the Congress as well as the leftist parties in India have the task of keeping the Nehru legacy alive not only in the domestic sphere but also in international affairs. The principle of enlightened self-interest calls for this. Any deviation from this position can only result in a setback to our advance towards socialism in our own country. This has to be borne in mind.

To sum up: the bickerings within the Congress which frequently come to the surface can be ended only by the entry of a large measure of young blood into its ranks; the Congress needs the support of all sections of the people, particularly the progressive parties, in implementing its declared policies; the parties of the left must give up opportunistic alliances and try to forge a united front based on the principles of socialism and a clear-cut short-term and long-range programme of action; the Congress and the progressive parties must stand together against those groups and elements which try to prevent progress towards the socialist goal. All this is easier said than done. But despite the many hurdles Jawaharlal had faith in the ability of the people of India to assert themselves over the years, and I humbly subscribe to the same undying faith.

NEHRU AND INDIAN PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY

M.C. SETALVAD

It has been said that "Nehru may justly be regarded as the foremost interpreter of liberal democracy that Asia has produced." Not only did he interpret democracy to Asia; he succeeded in a considerable measure in applying and adapting democratic ideas and theories to the political life of the Indian people.

Parliamentary democracy, our theme, is only a facet of democracy. It is but a means to attain the end of a democratic way of life which should permeate not only the political activities of the nation but also its social and economic life. It is therefore essential to examine the influences which helped to build up democratic tradition in Nehru and to appreciate the concept of democracy which moved Nehru throughout his leadership of the nation and the Indian Government.

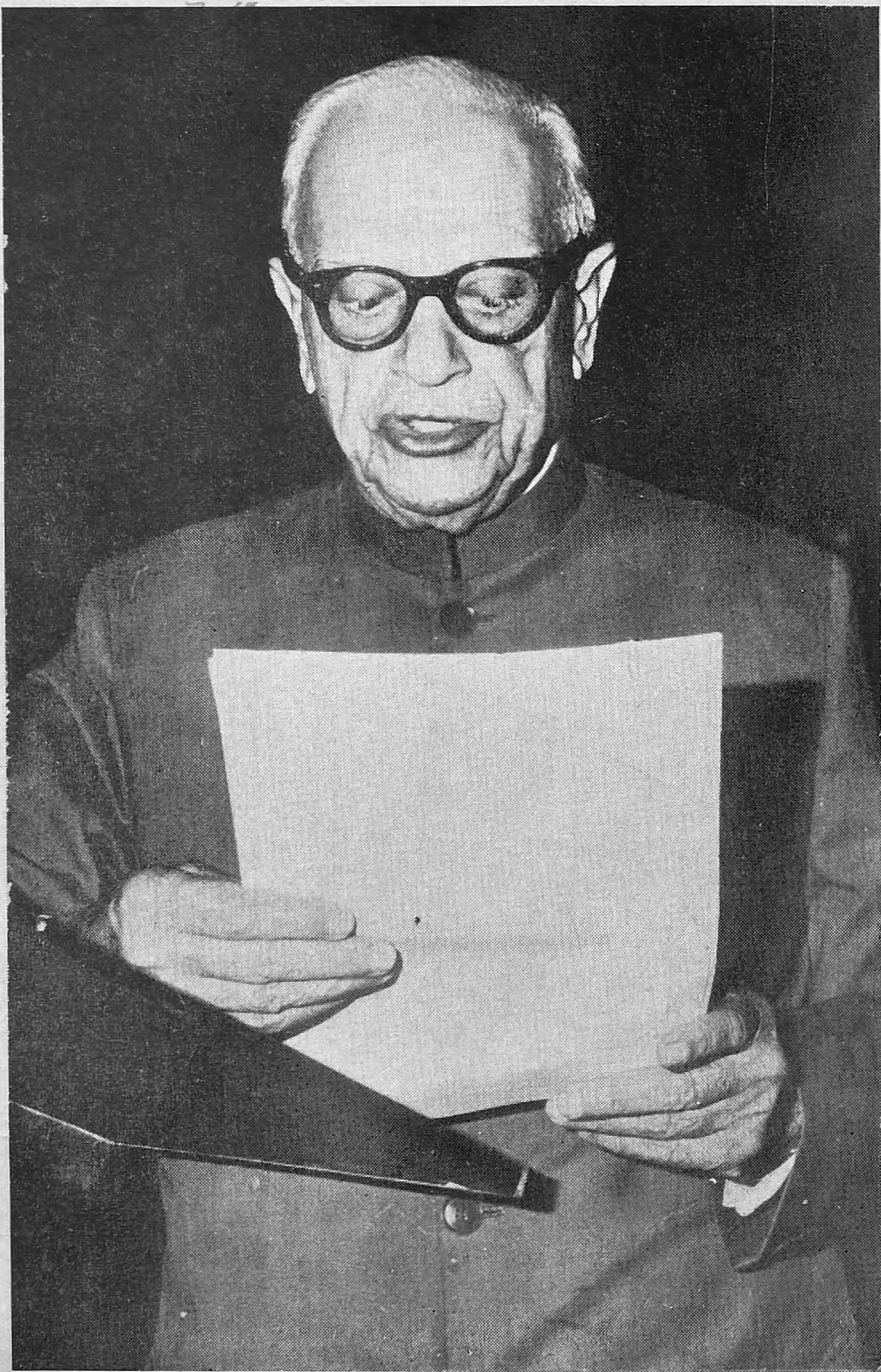
The task of the person who enters on this quest is rendered extremely easy by Nehru himself. No political leader and nation-builder has spoken his mind on the subject of democracy and parliamentary government so frequently and with such utter frankness as Nehru in his numerous writings and speeches extending over a period of about 30 years. What he thought and believed and how and why he acted, many a time, stand revealed in his own felicitous words.

Ancient Indian tradition was undoubtedly the base on which rested Nehru's democratic ideals. He has remarked on "the freedom of thought and writing in India in the olden days. There was what was known as freedom of conscience. This was not so in Europe till very recent times, and even now there are some difficulties."¹ Over seven years spent in England at the

1. Nehru, Jawaharlal, *Glimpses of World History*, John Day Co., New York, 1942, p. 129



Photo by D. G. Tendulkar



Courtesy : LINK

most impressionable period of his life and education in that country created in him an admiration for the achievements of Western democracy in England. Said he: "Personally, I owe too much to England in my mental make up ever to feel wholly alien to her. And, do what I will, I cannot get rid of the habits of mind and the standards and ways of judging other countries as well as life generally which I acquired at school and college in England."² He has described himself "as a queer mixture of the East and the West" and said that "my thoughts and approach to life are more akin to what is called Western than Eastern."³ Probably it was during these years that he came to be firmly wedded to what he has called his "preference ... for science and the methods of science." Nehru's visit to Soviet Russia in 1927 had undoubtedly a profound influence in his concepts of social and democratic welfare. He was deeply impressed by the tremendous changes which Russian revolutionary methods had brought about in life in Soviet Russia. Nevertheless he was shocked by the ruthless way of treating political opponents in Soviet Russia. The manner in which the visit to Soviet Russia affected him may be summed up in his own words. "My outlook was wider, and nationalism by itself seemed to me a narrow and insufficient creed. Political freedom, independence, were no doubt essential, but they were steps only in the right direction; without social freedom and a socialistic structure of society and the state, neither the country nor the individual could develop much."⁴

His repeated emphasis in later years on the unreality of political democracy viewed apart from economic and social democracy undoubtedly had its origin in the influence exercised over him by the developments in Soviet Russia which he had occasion to witness.

It would be convenient at this stage to summarise four major aspects in which Nehru viewed the concept of democracy. To him, first and foremost, democracy meant individual freedom. The value of the democratic state lay in the freedom which it conferred on the individual "for the realisation of human values

2. *Toward Freedom, Autobiography of Jawaharlal Nehru*, John Day Co., New York, 1941, p. 266

3. *Ibid*, p. 353

4. *Ibid*, p. 128

and the creative development of personality." Individual freedom had however to be understood and shaped in the context of social responsibility.

Secondly, democracy necessarily involved representative government; sovereignty in a democracy had to be exercised through elected representatives functioning on the principle of the majority. In other words, a democracy must be governed by popularly elected representatives and a democratic state may well take the form of a parliamentary government modelled on the British pattern. However, even though the majority may over-ride the views of the minority they were not to be permitted to undermine the religious, cultural and other basic rights of the minority which had to be protected. An essential element of such a representative government was in his view the existence of responsible political parties.

The third essential aspect of democracy was in Nehru's view economic and social equality. His firm belief in this aspect led to his repeated insistence on the ideal of a secular state devoid of class and caste distinctions. Such economic and social equality would necessarily imply a change in the existing economic and social conditions. Such a change may mean a deprivation of existing rights and to that extent a curtailment of freedom. That, however, was in his view inevitable in order to ensure economic and social equality which he regarded as the very foundation of a true democratic state.

Fourthly, he thought that no democracy could run without self-discipline, in the units which constitute the democratic state and its citizens. Tolerance of differing points of view, peaceful methods of resolving differences and allowing the majority view to prevail were a necessary part of this self-discipline of the community.

Perhaps nowhere did Nehru state more clearly how inevitably economic changes were bound up with political freedom than when he wrote to Lord Lothian in 1936: "I agree with you also that the political phase comes first, indeed without that phase there is no other phase. It may be accompanied by social changes or followed soon after by them. Personally I am perfectly prepared to accept that political democracy is only the way to the goal and is not the final objective. The real demand for it comes from a desire, sometimes unconscious, for economic

changes. If these changes do not follow soon enough the political structure is likely to be unstable. I am inclined to think that in India circumstanced as she is today the need for economic change is urgent and a vital political change will be inevitably accompanied or followed by substantial economic changes. In any event the political change should be such as to facilitate these social changes.”⁵

That political democracy would be meaningless without what Nehru called social and economic democracy was put before the Constituent Assembly squarely by Nehru on the 3rd of April, 1948. “A democracy is not purely a political affair. The nineteenth century conception of democracy, that is, each person having a vote, was a good enough conception in those days, but it was incomplete and people think in terms of a larger and deeper democracy today. After all there is no equality between the pauper who has a vote and the millionaire who has a vote. There are a hundred ways of exercising influence for the the millionaire which the pauper has not got. After all there is no equality between the person who has tremendous educational advantages and the person who had had none. So educationally, economically and otherwise, people differ greatly. People will, I suppose differ to some extent. All human beings are not equal in the sense of ability or capacity. But the whole point is that people should have equality of opportunity and that they should be able to go as far as they can go.

“Now it is patent in India today that there are huge differences between certain groups, classes and individuals. There is a big hiatus between those at the top and those at the bottom. If we are to have democracy it becomes necessary and essential for us not merely to bridge that gap but to lessen it very greatly: in fact to bring them closer together as far as opportunities are concerned, as far ultimately as general living conditions are concerned, and in so far as the necessities of life are concerned, leaving out for the moment luxuries and the rest, though ultimately there seems to me to be no particular reason why any particular group or class should not be favoured even in regard to the luxuries of life. But that is perhaps a rather distant picture. Now, because there are such great differences in India, it

5. Norman, Dorothy (Ed.) *Nehru: The First Sixty Years*, Vol. 1 (Asia Publishing House), 1965, p. 391

becomes incumbent upon us, not only for humanitarian reasons but from the standpoint of the fulfilment of democracy to raise up those people who are low down in the social and economic scale and to bring to them every possible opportunity of growth and progress.”⁶

He continued to hold the view that political democracy was but a means to achieving the end of true democracy in all its aspects, long after independence. Addressing the First All-India Seminar on Parliamentary Democracy in 1956 he observed: “Democracy, as a speaker just now said, is a means to an end. What is the end we aim at? I do not know if everybody will agree with me, but I would say that the end is the good life for the individual....

“In the past democracy has been taken chiefly to mean political democracy, roughly represented by the idea of every person having a vote. It is obvious that a vote by itself does not mean very much to a person who is down and out and starving. Such a person will be much more interested in food to eat than in a vote. Therefore, political democracy by itself is not enough except that it may be used to obtain a gradually increasing measure of economic democracy. The good things of life must become available to more and more people and gross inequalities must be removed. That process has, no doubt gone on for some time in countries where there is political democracy.”⁷

Again speaking at the AICC Session at Indore in 1957 he emphasised the same point of view. “We have definitely accepted the democratic process. Why have we accepted it? Well, for a variety of reasons. Because we think in the final analysis it promotes the growth of human beings and of society; because, as we have said in our Constitution, we attach great value to individual freedom; because we want the creative and the adventurous spirit of man to grow. It is not enough for us merely to produce the material goods of the world. We do want high standards of living, but not at the cost of man’s creative spirit, his creative energy, his spirit of adventure; not at the cost of all those fine things of life which have ennobled man throughout the ages. Democracy is not merely a question of elections.”⁸

6. *Speeches*, Vol. I, pp. 49-50

7. *Speeches*, Vol. III, pp. 137-138

8. *Speeches*, Vol. III, pp. 53

Jawaharlal's views as to the vital importance of economic democracy remained unchanged almost to the last. Speaking at Bangalore on the 6th of February, 1962, he observed, "Democracy normally means political democracy, giving each person a vote. The right of voting is good and useful but it is precious little good if it is accompanied by hunger and starvation...."

"Therefore, the proper way is to have full democracy in the sense of not only political democracy but economic democracy. It should give an opportunity to large numbers of people to profit by the democratic method and to have more or less equal chances to progress. Political democracy should inevitably lead up to economic democracy. Even in countries which are supposed to be highly capitalistic the tendency to economic democracy is obvious. The tendency, in other words, is towards some form of socialism. The Scandinavian countries, possibly the most advanced countries of Europe, have socialist democracy."⁹

This however does not mean that Jawaharlal was unmindful of the great merit in political theory and practice of a system of parliamentary government. Speaking in the Lok Sabha on the 28th of March, 1957 he explained these advantages.

"We chose this system of parliamentary democracy deliberately; we chose it not only because to some extent, we had always thought on those lines previously, but because we thought it was in keeping with our own old traditions, not the old traditions as they were, but adjusted to the new conditions and new surroundings.... The system of parliamentary democracy embodies... principles of change and continuity. And it is up to those who function in this system, members of the House and the numerous others who are part of this system, to increase the pace of change, to make it as fast as they like, subject to the principle of continuity. If continuity is broken we become rootless and the system of parliamentary democracy breaks down. Parliamentary democracy is a delicate plant and it is a measure of our own success that this plant has become sturdier during these last few years. We may pass out of this House or pass out of our lives, but the nation goes on. Therefore, here when we stand at this end, which is also a beginning, we indulge

9. *Speeches*, Vol. IV, pp. 150, 151 and 152

in retrospect and we indulge in prospect. We may think of many things that we have undertaken and of the new labours we have to undertake. But, above all we have to remember how stable, how deep, are the foundations of this democracy that we have sought to serve and to build up in this country. Ultimately, it is on the strength and depth of these roots that we shall prosper, on strength of character and capacity for service, and not by the number of laws we pass, not by our external activities.”¹⁰

The democratic form of government had also a powerful appeal for Nehru on the ground, that it provides a peaceful method of achieving all ends which may from time to time be thought desirable by the community. He expounded this view in this address to the First All-India Seminar on Parliamentary Democracy in 1956 “We believe in democracy. Speaking for myself, I believe in it, first of all, because I think it is the right means to achieve ends and because it removes the pressures which other forms of government may impose on the individual. It transforms the discipline which is imposed by authority largely to self-discipline. Self-discipline means that even people who do not agree—the minority—accept solutions because it is better to accept them than to have conflict. It is better to accept them and then change them if necessary, by peaceful methods.] Therefore, democracy means to me an attempt at the solution of problems by peaceful methods. If it is not peaceful, then to my mind, it is not democracy. If I may further elaborate the second reason, democracy gives the individual an opportunity to develop. Such opportunity does not mean anarchy, where every individual does what he likes. A social organisation must have some disciplines to hold it together. Those can either be imposed from outside or be in the nature of self-discipline. Imposition from outside may take the form of one country governing another or an autocratic or authoritarian form of government. In a proper democracy, discipline is self-imposed. [There is no democracy if there is no discipline.”¹¹

Consistently with the great importance which he attached to individual freedom Nehru was a great lover of civil liberties which he regarded as of vital importance to the functioning of a free and democratic government. In 1936 he condemned what he

10. *Speeches*, Vol. III, pp. 153 to 158

11. *Speeches*, Vol. III, pp. 139 and 140

called "the tremendous deprivation of civil liberties in India." Said he: "a government that has to rely on Criminal Law Amendment Act and similar laws, to suppress the press and literature, that bans hundreds of organisations, that keeps people in prison without trial and that does so many other things that are happening in India is a government that has ceased to have even a shadow of a justification for its existence. I can never adjust myself to these conditions; I find them intolerable."¹²

However the practical experience of government made him realise after independence that under certain circumstances a curtailment of civil liberties was inevitable. He took the view that however great the importance of civil liberties no responsible government could help limiting them to prevent the preaching of and incitement to violence. "Here we are committed to civil liberty in its broadest form. There can be no freedom in a country without a wide extension of civil liberties. We are also interning people without trial in large numbers and some of our provincial governments are passing legislation of a kind to which we took the greatest objection in the old days. It is an irony of fate that we have to do this. Yet, we have done it and done it after full thought, not casually, because the matter was of the most serious concern to us. Now what are we to do about it? People come to us complaining about civil liberty and they find a certain answering echo in our minds. That fact is that if we do not act, something infinitely worse takes place in the country—chaos and disorder. Not chaos and disorder only, for you know that brutal murders have taken place in some parts of the country, and if there is one thing that this government cannot possibly permit as long as it calls itself a government or has a semblance of authority, it is deliberate murder and sabotage that any group may indulge in. I do not mind the preaching of any doctrine, provided there is no violence in it. I do not think any interpretation of civil liberty includes the preaching of violence or acts of violence. . . .

"Now I want to make it perfectly clear that it still remains our conception of civil liberty that we should allow the fullest freedom to people of all groups to preach their doctrines, provided there are no incitements to violence. It just does not matter

12. Norman, Dorothy, *op. cit.*, p. 429

whether we agree with that doctrine or not: if it does not lead to violence, we shall allow it to be preached. But if it does, if it is meant to lead to violence or sabotage, then it will not be allowed and if it is necessary to limit civil liberty for that purpose, civil liberty will be limited. There is no other way.”¹³

As lately as 1962 speaking of the Chinese aggression and the consequent enactment of the Defence of India Ordinance he said “In India we have to face the new situation against a background of democratic freedom. To some extent, these freedoms have to be limited. There is the Defence of India Ordinance which is not functioning wholly as it is meant to. We do not like to enforce even the Defence of India Ordinance unless we are forced to do it.”¹⁴

Nehru was fully alive to the importance of an opposition to the adequate functioning of a parliamentary system of government. Speaking in Madras in 1957 he said, “I believe completely in any government, whatever it might be, having stout critics, having an opposition to face. Without criticism people and governments become complacent. The whole parliamentary system of government is based on such criticism. The free press is also based on criticism. It would be a bad thing for us if the Press was not free to criticise, if people were not allowed to speak and criticise government fully and in the open, it would not be parliamentary government. It would not be a proper democracy. I welcome criticism in Parliament. In fact, we welcome criticism from our own party members. The amount of room we have in our own party for criticism of government’s policy is great.”¹⁵

We have so far depicted Nehru’s ideals on various aspects of democracy basing ourselves mainly on his published writings and speeches. These tell us emphatically what he aimed at. But of greater importance perhaps are his performance and achievement. Are we in a position to assess them? It may well be said that we are too near his time to be able to form a detached judgment and make a true appraisal. Those should be the tasks for the historian of the future. Yet there have been events and happenings which may justify our making a few observations.

13. *Speeches* Vol. I, pp. 186 and 187

14. *Speeches* Vol. IV, pp. 109

15. *Speeches* Vol. III, p. 152

Taking democracy in its political aspect, the functioning of Parliament, there is little doubt that Nehru established conventions and traditions which if followed will tend to put our parliamentary government on a sound and durable footing. So conscious was he of the supremacy of Parliament in all matters that when he heard a senior minister in his cabinet assert in Parliament that he would not adopt a certain course even if Parliament asked him to do so he, it is reported, said that the minister concerned, however experienced, could never be entrusted with the responsibility of being a Prime Minister. Indeed Nehru has been described by his foreign biographer as "a supreme democrat."]

However so overshadowing was Jawaharlal's great personality that notwithstanding his ardent desire to be true to all parliamentary tradition he not infrequently ignored Parliament and disregarded the norms governing cabinet responsibility. His personal loyalty to friends frequently led him to continue as his colleagues inefficient, outworn or even undesirable politicians. His policy of trust in China made him withhold from Parliament important facts relating to Chinese aggression which he was ultimately forced to admit when information from other sources had reached Parliament. Indeed his policy towards China and his blind and unreasoning trust in a colleague brought the country almost to the brink of disaster at the time of the Chinese aggression in 1962. Equally unparliamentary and undemocratic was his dogged persistence in continuing in his a cabinet colleagues against whom allegations of corruption had been openly made and his continuance in office of a Chief Minister who had been guilty of persistent acts of maladministration while in charge of an important state. His loyalty to and trust in colleagues frequently made him ignore the well accepted doctrine of ministerial responsibility.

Notwithstanding however all these counts against him it must be acknowledged that Jawaharlal, the father of parliamentary democracy in India, fostered its growth and development to a remarkable degree.

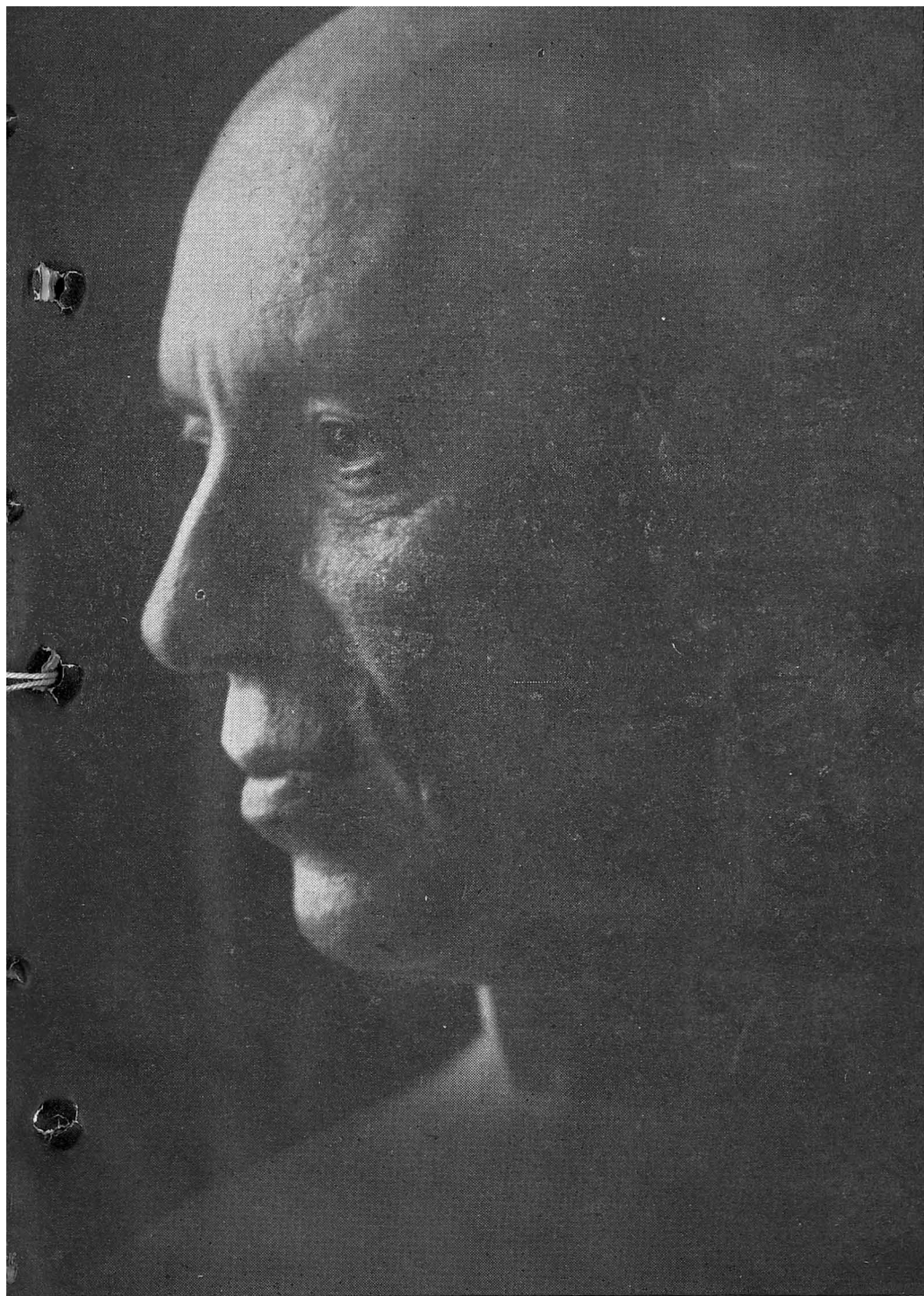
It has to be remembered that the machinery of parliamentary and cabinet government can be carried on only by a team of men supported by a party. The measure by which Nehru's performance in the matter of parliamentary democracy fell short of his ideals may in part be attributed to the colleagues with whom

he had to work and the party which he had to carry with him. As to economic freedom which he believed to be so vital a part of democratic achievement, Nehru strove to his utmost for economic equality and for raising the standards of life of the millions of India. Planning and scientific and technical development received his close and constant attention. But here again he had to steer a middle course between those, on the one hand, who wished him to act on slogans and shibboleths ingoring the realities of the situation and those, on the other hand, who were guardians of vested interests among men of his own party.

As to social freedom, notwithstanding his bold and repeated attacks on casteism and communalism and his repeated calls for a secular approach to all problems he was beset by circumstances which frequently gave a set-back to the wheel of progress. It was indeed an irony of fate that when the leader of the ruling party was striving hard against these divisive forces the party itself both in the matter of elections and administration at the state levels largely practised casteism and communalism. Nevertheless, notwithstanding these separatist trends, the Nehru era made on the whole a substantial contribution towards the goal of a secular and united India.

Recently within two years of Nehru's leaving us we appear to be going down a steep dark slope. Some of the legislative bodies have shown a complete lack of discipline. The cult of disorganisation and violence seems to be gathering strength. Economically, the country seems to be in a very difficult corner.

Nehru thought, as does the present Prime Minister, that "the essence of democracy was to take the vast masses of people into confidence and produce a sensation in them that they are partners in a vast undertaking of running a nation, partners in the government, partners in industry." In these difficult days it is the bounden duty of every citizen, particularly the educated and knowing citizen, to make his utmost endeavour to create a confidence and a feeling in the vast masses of the people that they are partners in a great adventure.



Courtesy: Photo Service Co.

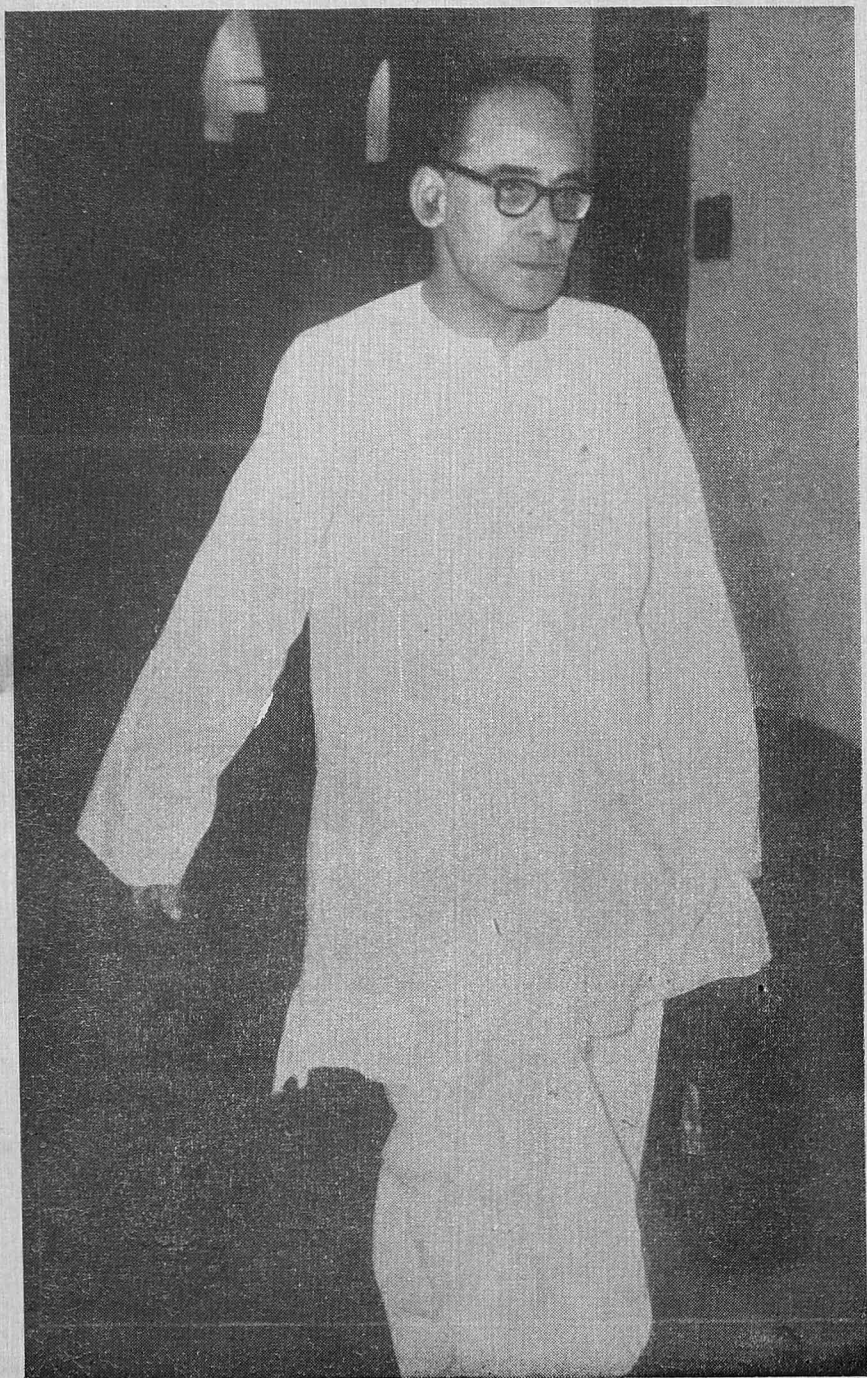


Photo by Kamal Kumar

NEHRU AND PARLIAMENT

HIREN MUKERJI

Notwithstanding a petty-minded recent tendency in certain quarters to minimize the role of Jawaharlal Nehru in the making of our age, there will be agreement that his life and work, while certainly in many instances open to criticism, had been a many-splendoured thing.

Some of that "splendour" was to be seen even in work to which he betook himself late in life, work which, considered in isolation, was perhaps never very near his heart, but work which he thought was important to the quality and durability of our country's polity. This was his work in Parliament, which as long as he was alive he dominated but in a manner that did not seriously irk those who chafed at the stolid and often insensitive strength inside Parliament of the party he led. To Jawaharlal's greatness there were many facets, and it does not injure his reputation if one hesitates to call him a great parliamentarian in the sense that, following Britain, we have come to attach to that phrase. He did bring to bear on parliamentary work, however, qualities that are rare and precious. Parliament, to those who have seen it with Jawaharlal at its centre, is no longer the same place.

Even without Jawaharlal's leadership, this country would in all probability have acquired and adapted to itself the parliamentary system, but perhaps without him it would not have taken so quickly what W.H. Morris-Jones, a close student of parliament in India, described as a "clear shape". Morris-Jones said further: "...now the network of canal courses along which power has to run is cut deep into the political soil and limits are set. No one will quite walk in Nehru's exact footsteps, but Nehru's great achievement may be to have made this unnecessary. There is a good path".—The path that Jawaharlal, pre-eminently, has laid.

During the period of our struggle for freedom, except at the very last phase when he became, in the so-called Interim

Government, vice-president of the Viceroy's Executive Council (1946), Jawaharlal had kept away from what may be called parliamentary work, whether in the time of the Swaraj Party founded by Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das and Motilal Nehru or in the years (1937-39) when the Congress was forming ministries in a majority of the provinces. In the post-1922 controversy between "pro-changers" and "no-changers", the former calling for a Congress decision in favour of Council-entry and the latter adhering to Gandhi's original programme, Jawaharlal did not align himself with either group but tried to bring about concord between them. In the process he collected some experience of *realpolitik* for he was, to quote from his autobiography, "quite shocked at the way some prominent Congressmen could intrigue", and discovered that the role of a buffer between fighting groups was always thankless. It appears, however, from some of his correspondence at the time that he had recognised the inevitability of a parliamentary phase of the struggle following the failure of direct action. Thus, on the eve of the transfer of power and for nearly seventeen years subsequently, he found himself the pivot of a parliamentary set-up which he entered without any previous personal familiarity with its working.

Towards the end of 1946, the Constituent Assembly met in Delhi, and Nehru spoke on the Objective Resolution: "We are at the end of an era...and my mind goes back to 5000 years of India's history.... All that past crowds upon me and exhilarates me and at the same time somewhat oppresses me...When I think also of the future...I tremble a little and feel overwhelmed by mighty task". These were beautiful words, characteristic of the man but also somewhat futile, for he was agonized by difficulties he could not overcome and was unable to get the Muslim League to give up its boycott and to share in the new tasks. Even so, it is good to recall what he said about the Resolution on an Independent Sovereign Republic: "It is a Declaration. It is a firm resolve. It is a pledge and an undertaking and it is, for all of us I hope, a dedication". How can it be forgotten that a beautiful and ineffectual angel is an angel nevertheless?

Moving words could not butter partitionist parsnips, and things proceeded unhappily, with the Muslim League receiving the most craftily camouflaged support from the British Government, till the country, stunned and almost played out as Jawaharlal

representing it appeared to be, reconciled itself to the division of India. No longer a country but—in that peculiar phrase—“a sub-continent”, we found ourselves free but nearly ineluctably frustrated, unsure of our own people and somewhat at bay, politically as well as spiritually, *vis-a-vis* imperialism. It was a crucial situation, whose most grievous expression was in relation to the problems, still not entirely solved, of Jammu and Kashmir.

Over the pall of fear and gloom which had fallen on parts of our country where communal venom and fury made an ugly appearance, rose Jawaharlal's unforgettable words in Parliament House on August 14-15, 1947, at a ceremony of dedication:

“Long years ago, we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom.... The achievement we celebrate today is a step, an opening of opportunity, to the greater triumphs and achievements that await us. Peace has been said to be indivisible. So is freedom so is prosperity now, and so also is disaster in this one world that can no longer be split into isolated fragments.”

Later, on August 15, 1947, Jawaharlal said: “As long as I am at the helm of affairs, India will not become a Hindu state” It needed much courage to say it in Delhi where unspeakable scenes were taking place and the coals of communal revenge glowed lividly even in many normally decent hearts. To the end of his days, whether in Parliament or outside, over the Kashmir issue, for instance, and on communalism generally, he never ceased to express his agony at the vile lapse into inhumanity which the communal mentality, with its element of dementia, would from time to time bring about. If there are lacunae in India's secularism and many defects still in its working, the blame devolves on our conditions and our own faults which were felt and sought to be rectified by none more genuinely and staunchly than by Jawaharlal. Even apart from him, the Congress would, very likely, have subscribed to secularism, but he lent it a certain glow, as he did to whatever in public life he deeply cared for.

In Parliament, what was endearing about Jawaharlal was not so much his respect for members and for the conventions of debate,

but the disarming frankness with which he would often speak, caring not at all for evasiveness and diplomatic finesse. As early as 1949 he said about food imports: "I think the very ease with which we have been able to get foodstuff from abroad has rather prevented us from facing the problem properly. I think we should think in terms of not getting any food at all from abroad after a certain period—let us put it at two years, I should not add a day more—and just make up our minds that we shall live on the food that we produce after two years or die in the attempt". Again, on another occasion in the early days of Parliament referring to the stupendous refugee problem and the enormities that had followed in the wake of partition he said: "In fact, I have often wondered why the people of India put up with people like me who are connected with the governing of India after all that has happened during the last few months. I am not quite sure that if I had not been in the government I would put up with my government". A few years later, when a member of Parliament reminded him of his earlier resolve to put an end to all imports of food by April 1952 he answered frankly: "I regret that my words have been falsified and I feel thoroughly ashamed that what was almost a pledge to the country has been broken". A touch of grave melancholy gave, on such occasions, a rare tone to his parliamentary appearance. It seems as if, even as he spoke he recalled his passion for "economic justice and opportunity for all" which had once made him warn that "everything that comes in the way will have to be removed gently if possible and forcibly if necessary", and at the same time realised how heart-breakingly hard his tasks were.

(In the first Parliament elected in terms of our Constitution, he was once taunted for having lost the fire of his earlier zeal and for having lost also his place in history for a portfolio! This was a gibe which Trotsky had once hurled at an adversary; but in Parliament Jawaharlal neatly and quietly parried it. He was not too anxious, he said, for a "place in history"; and would be content with serving India and her interests to the best of his powers. But he knew also that his people expected of him results that he could not produce, and that he could not bring himself to following methods of work, perhaps somewhat ruthless but at bottom beneficent, which alone, he knew, could produce results in a country with such a backlog of misfortune, apathy and mis-direction.

"I must confess", he said once, "to a feeling of exceeding disappointment that all our effort has not yielded better results. I expected much better results and better results there should have been. . . . I am afraid in our generation there is going to be little rest or little peace. The prospect before us is work, hard labour. This generation is sentenced to hard labour".

Planning, so dear to Nehru's heart, was a more serious business than being lyrical about the picture of an industrially transformed India travelling with dignified steps towards socialism. Jawaharlal knew it very well himself; no one could put it so beautifully as when he said that his generation of Indians had been sentenced to hard labour and that to take one's ease was sin. His strong point was the capacity to offer his people fresh, evocative goals and "to take the vision a notch higher every time". Between enunciation and implementation of policies, however, there would always be a wide divergence which he could not eliminate. Even so, new dimensions would flash before the mind's eye when he spoke in Parliament on the plans. "In the final analysis", he said in 1956, "any effort is an act of faith", and then—as with a flash, he would add: "I have faith in the capacity of our people". This kind of thing was something to be thankful for whatever his shortcomings and the failures of his administration, he was, even in his most passive moments, seeking tirelessly to push India forward in the direction of a secular and socialist future and had made a personal commitment to dynamic perspectives which he never ceased to expound and defend before his people.

It needed no little courage, if the condition of those times be remembered, for Nehru to aver as he did from Delhi in November 1947: "We intend cooperating with the United States of America and we intend cooperating fully with the Soviet Union". Some time later he said: "India is too big a country to be bound down to any country, however big it may be". Late in 1956, in Parliament he condemned the cold war, then current, for creating "a bigger mental barrier than brick walls or iron curtains do", and added, "we are not obsessed by fear. We are not obsessed by hatred of any country. We are not obsessed even by the dislike of any country. Our minds are a little more receptive than those of others—communists, anti-communists or socialists. I do think that is a virtue in us and it is in the good democratic tradition. When that goes, it is bad for the world"

Thus it was that, under the most dreadful pressure against his policy of non-alignment when China in October-November 1962 committed aggression on our borders, Jawaharlal told his people that it was not communism but the perverse chauvinism of a neighbour that India had to contend against. Never minimising the requirements of defence, he explained that in order not to jeopardise her future India must simultaneously pursue the tasks, which were intertwined, of defence and of development. And with a refinement rare among the world politicians he insisted that India and China were both great countries that could not be ordered about, that he was always ready for an honourable settlement of disputes by negotiation, that against the people of China and their culture India had no animus even though India's desire for friendship had been crudely rebuffed by China's leaders who zealously spouted revolutionary words but objectively assisted reactionary machinations. From time to time, in Parliament, he might have made mistakes in emphasis, and in a complex situation it was only expected, but his basic stand was unexceptionable.

He was too civilised to react wholehoggingly to what he must have known of the Anglo-American plot over Kashmir, but the iron must have entered into his soul even as he said: "We have indeed been overscrupulous in this (Kashmir) matter, so that nothing may be done in the passion of the moment which might be wrong". Again later, he said: "Kashmir is only a plaything for them (Pakistan's patrons in the U.N.), while it is very much in our hearts, they had the audacity to talk of imperialism to us when they were imperialists themselves and were carrying on their own wars and preparing for future wars. Just because India had tried to protect Kashmir from territorial invasion people had the temerity to talk of Indian imperialism". He had to bear attacks on account of India's rightful restoration to herself of Portuguese-held Goa, attacks which were on the same lines as those alleging his "helping the Soviet aggression against Hungary and the Chinese aggression on Tibet". Too often he laughed away such spouting of "democratic" venom; perhaps he never fully realised its implications. It is sufficient, however, for the biggest political reputation to be described, as Nehru was described on account of his life-long involvement with the Afro-Asian fight for freedom from colonialism, as "the sculptor of

the ethics of our part of the world"—beautiful words used at a United Nations meeting to condole his death, by the Moroccan delegate, Ahmed Tabi Benhima.

To quote, even on a rigidly selective basis, from Nehru's innumerable, and always at least in part significant, speeches in Parliament will be an endless task and need not be attempted. But one cannot forget the easy plan of his utterances, the unforced thoughtfulness of his ideas, even when cursorily related, the ceaseless interest in his people and the stress on dynamism he constantly laid. There were memorable flashes as when he spoke on Stalin—probably the finest obituary on Stalin came from Jawaharlal in the Indian Parliament—or when, confronting communists as his major parliamentary opponents, but he would at the same time flay right reaction vainly set on pulling back history's wheels. One wonders if communism and communists have ever had a finer tribute than when this great man whom they often irritated, spoke of Lenin, greatest among communists, having "an organic sense of life" and of "marching step by step with history", and added: "to a small extent, every communist, who has understood the philosophy of his movement, has it".

Though about Jawaharlal's adherence to planning and to socialism it could very well be said that "between the conception and the creation falls the shadow", it must be recognised that he did not hesitate to aver that parliamentary democracy had to prove itself today by evolving real links with socialism. Some years ago he told an audience of parliamentarians: "I do not see what parliamentary democracy has got to do with private enterprise. I do not see any connection between the two except the connection of past habit and past thinking. I would venture to say that there is going to be an increased conflict between the idea of parliamentary government and full-fledged private enterprise". Agreeing that the objectives of our Plan required the organised pressures of a popular movement so dynamic and purposeful that it could inspire people to do voluntarily the kind of thing which some socialist countries had perhaps achieved by regimentation, Nehru conceded that the administrative apparatus which was the same as in British days, had to be made quick-moving and popular so that the infinitely complicated problems of today could be dealt with.

There was nobody as punctilious as Jawaharlal in regard to the courtesies of parliamentary life; the very manner of his entry into the House, the deep bow to the chair as he took his seat, his observance of parliamentary etiquette in the best sense of the term particularly as regards respect to the whole House which found vent in a constant readiness to answer even irritating interruptions. He was no expert when questions relating to privilege and such things cropped up, but he was full of sound sense in his suggestions regarding procedure and was always keen on upholding the prestige of the House as a whole.

In the earlier years he would sometimes flare up and show something of his celebrated temper, but he would calm down quickly, and if necessary would make ample amends for his own outburst. It was a delight to watch him in such moods, for it showed him as a straight and generous man who stood sharply for certain principles but respected also the other man's right to his point of view. In recent years he seemed to have developed a kind of quietude; he would be seldom angry, and if more than ordinarily provoked, would recover himself very quickly. This was felt by many to be a loss, for even when he flared up there used to be a sudden shine of his spirit which was worth great deal.)

Unlike most Prime Ministers he spoke *extempore* almost entirely without notes, and while as a result he sometimes rembled, the artist in him came out regularly in some beautiful flashes and the thinker in him always gave a certain compactness to his ideas. It was as if a very sensitive man was thinking aloud, and to hear him thus, though occasionally he was repetitive, was a genuine pleasure. One could see that here was a politician very different from the usual breed, here was a coin minted very differently.

When he spoke on such cherished themes as Planning he was indeed the organ-voice of the country. The follow-up in action was not his *forte*, but to concepts like "the commanding heights" in the economy being in social control he gave vent beautifully. (He was, especially laterly, needled often by right-wing spokesmen, but with gentle irony he would rebut such people as Acharya Kripalani and Professor Ranga, the latter visibly wilting under Jawaharlal's ascription to him also of Kripalani's honorific prefix. A part of him was undoubtedly allergic

towards communists but he never withheld from them a certain intellectual respect. It was perhaps not entirely without significance that during a no-confidence debate he defended his notorious rightist colleagues in the cabinet like Morarji Desai and S.K. Patil whom the communists had singled out for special attack, but as soon as an opportunity presented itself in the shape of the Kamaraj formula, he proceeded without fuss and without delay to ease them out of his cabinet. The votaries of the *status quo* genuinely angered him, but there was in him a streak of gentleness, which one might also call weakness, which prevented him acting the way which perhaps he really wished. It was thus that Jawaharlal was at the same time a fascinating and an exasperating personality. But there was about him a complete freedom from pettiness and what might be called a certain cleanliness of mind which few can attain.)

True to the kindred points of heaven and home Jawaharlal would not only soar high on the wings of his ideas; he would do his daily chores, meticulously—and as members of Parliament so often recall, he would answer every letter with a promptness that when the voluminous and varied nature of his correspondence is borne in mind, it was nearly a marvel. With all his preoccupations, he would unfailingly find time for opposition spokesmen wishing to discuss things with him. They will not forget his gentle bearing, the sadness that sometimes settled on his face, while suddenly a smile would chase away the gloom.

And those who had come nearer to him can hardly bear yet to talk about what has gone out of their lives now that he is gone. How forget such things as being asked, after a few weeks in Parliament, about one's children—for whom he said he always had time, but not for adults!—and then having the family invited to a meal which at least the two small children fondled by the great man and even helped to handle the knives and forks, will always cherish as a wonderful memory?

The country thought so much of Jawaharlal that our expectations from him also were excessive. Between him and his people there was, however, a bond that nothing could break. While Gandhiji belonged, as it were, to another planet, Jawaharlal was different; he was someone who could be shouted at and yet looked up to. There was no sordidness about him. Ceaselessly

active sometimes weary, even frantic, and almost always restless though with an inner core of quiet which kept him going. Jawaharlal had discovered his India which changes and yet is changeless. It was a vision that only nobility of soul could achieve.

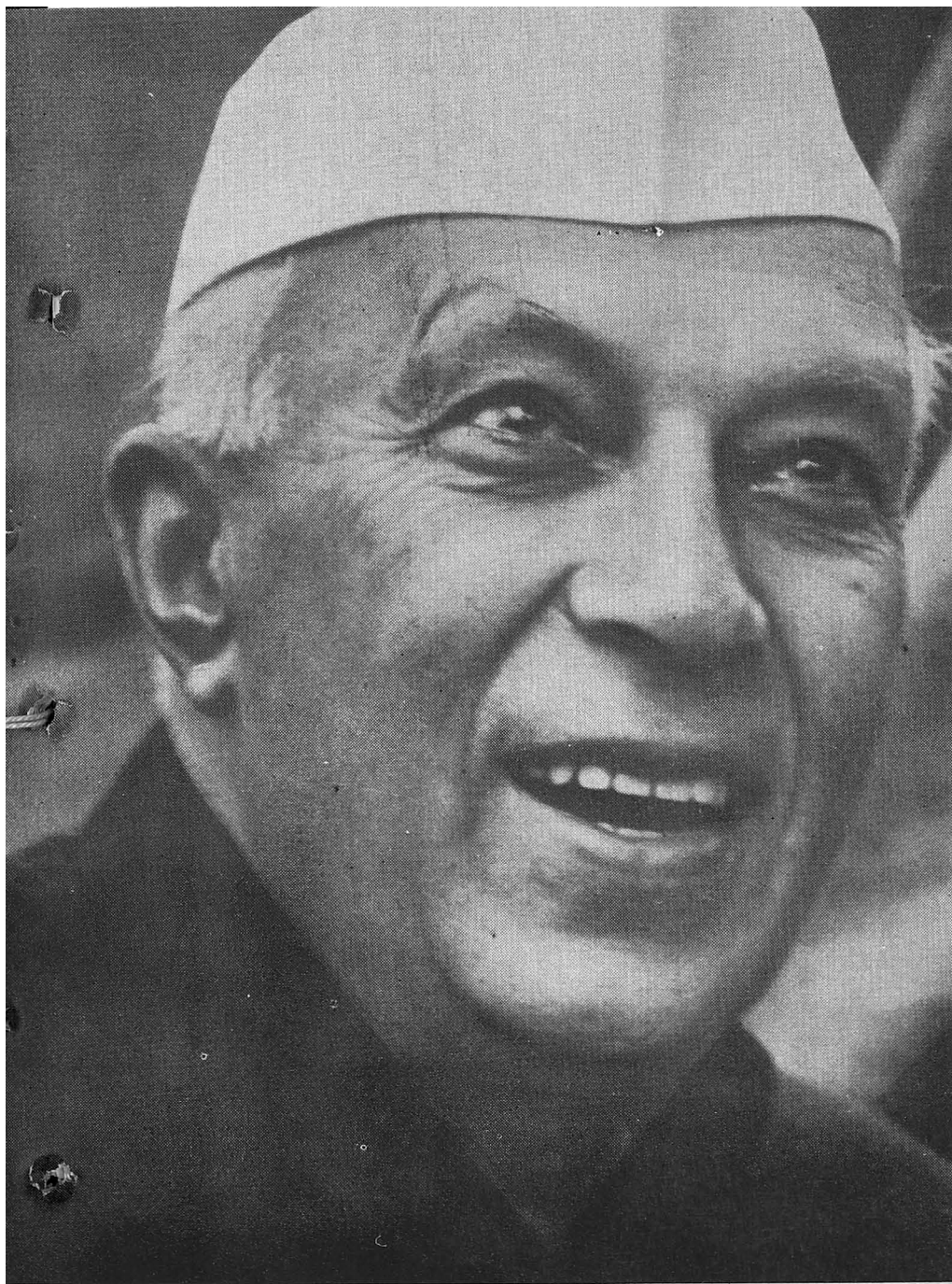


Photo by D. N. Sharma



Photo by Virendra Kumar

NEHRU AND PLANNING

GYAN CHAND

Jawaharlal's interest in and even passion for planning developed after his visit to the Soviet Union in 1927 and until his death in May 1964 his faith in planning as a powerful instrument of economic advance and social transformation not only remained undiminished but acquired increasing depth, insight and understanding from his experience of the formulation and implementation of the three Plans in the country. This faith was a part of his growing faith in socialism as a way to the future for the world as a whole—and more particularly for India. This faith in the beginning was vague and confused, but as he came to the forefront of politics in India, took active and heroic part in the struggle for freedom and identified himself with the hungry masses of the country and became their adored leader, it became a living faith, the fire of which in the last two or three years of his life glowed with greater intensity and brightness.

It is not easy to sum up briefly the meaning of socialism to Jawaharlal. Even up to the end it retained a degree of indefinite and undefined quality. The view that lack of rigidity of his socialist outlook was more a measure of the lack of precision and rigour in thinking in regard to socialism than of undogmatic approach to it can be supported by citing facts drawn from Jawaharlal's exposition of socialism and implementation of his policy. The fact that in practice regression from socialism rather than advance towards it is an outstanding feature of our development since independence is largely due to socialism not having been given clear and real content in our planned development. And yet planning in India was inspired by the view, in the words of Jawaharlal that "it is essentially a process whereby we stop those cumulative forces at work which make the poor poorer and start a new series of cumulative forces which make them get over this difficulty."¹

1. Nehru, Jawaharlal, *speeches*, Vol. IV, pp. 112.

In his presidential address at Lahore in 1929 he declared that he was a socialist because he was “no believer in an order which produces kings of industry who have greater power over and velis fortunes of men and whose methods are as predatory as of old feudal aristocracy”: He was for basing the economic programme on “human outlook and not on sacrifice of men to money”. This view though wide enough to accommodate diverse standpoints was the guiding principle of Jawaharlal in his approach to planning. The flexibility of his approach was not an unmixed advantage. It not only involved recourse to necessary and inevitable compromises, but also in practice tolerance of discordant elements in the planning process and its virtual frustration on that account. Nevertheless, the picture of India which more than thirty years ago rose before him—“naked, starving, crushed and utterly miserable”—remained a part of his intellectual and spiritual outfit and was his constant inspiration in planning as in his whole life work. He worked to make this nightmare a matter of the past, and though he knew very well that he did not achieve any significant measure of success in this respect through the three Plans, poverty and exploitation of the masses remained for him a call of the future and planning the chief instrument for ending this misery. It thereby became a value in itself for him; and though its full implications and obligations were not clearly grasped by him nor worked out in practice, for him planning always remained a great adventure, an act of consecration in the performance of which, to adapt Shelley’s well-known words, he neither changed nor faltered nor repented. This was the spirit of planning for him, its animating purpose and if it is kept alive and becomes the moving force of the planners of today and tomorrow, Jawaharlal’s work will be fulfilled even though in concrete terms planning as practised during his life time has in many ways been virtually its negation.

Unity of social purpose has necessarily to be the cardinal feature of planning in all forms, stages and manifestations. If planning is not to be merely playing with models and algebraic equations, a vision of the future, vision of what planning is for has to be its all-pervading purpose, it has to inform it in its entirety and details. Jawaharlal was very keenly aware of the imperative need for and profound importance of this vision and in his inspired moments he again and again spoke of it with great

fervour and earnestness. Unfortunately he did not succeed in transmitting his inspiration to the planners even at the highest level. A vision, which makes planning an exercise in social craftsmanship of devising ways and means by which a new social structure with its own power-pattern to replace the power-pattern of old social structure has to be the mainspring of planning and the old pattern has to be dismantled by stages and rendered powerless to impede the peoples' march to the future. This is the essence of social revolution, and this change of power-pattern has also to be planned and the prime movers by which the change has to be brought about have to be provided and operated with a clear-sighted will and purpose.

Jawaharlal knew vividly what heavy cost had to be paid in the Soviet Union and the other communist countries for social revolution and was very keen that the way of violence be avoided by our people, and a substitute for their dynamism—a democratic and peaceful substitute for force by which regimes in communist countries established socialist societies, had and has to be provided. No constructive thought was given to the process by which this substitute could be found. Our social structure with its corresponding power-pattern remained almost unchanged even though the princes and landlords lost after independence their political and economic power to a considerable extent. The admitted failure of land reforms and the growing concentration of economic and, therefore, political power amounted to an admission that no significant changes in social structure had taken place. Parliamentary system was, it was well known, being subjected to severe stresses, fragmentation of political life of the country was progressively increasing and bringing about growing demoralisation of public life in its train. This was taking place during Jawaharlal's life and he had to accept compromises in the administration of a number of states in which the persons in authority were practising political thuggery of the worst type. This was clearly due to the social vision, which for Jawaharlal was the very soul of planning and its inspiring and sustaining force, having become a political phantom and a means of creating delusions and wearing masks with which the planners and administrators used to cover their vacuity and insincerity. Jawaharlal wore increasingly an expression of silent anguish in his sensitive face which became more poignant

owing to his failing health as his end drew near. This all-permeating social purpose, which he so keenly wanted to embody in and express through planning process never became an operative reality and planning in practice remained a soulless process and without any capacity to move the people's hearts and spirit.

Planning, if it had to become a life process and make history, had to be an instrument and an integral part of social revolution in which the masses could be brought into action to give it a momentum of an all-embracing irresistible purpose. This did not happen even when Jawaharlal was at the helm and now it can happen only if there is a wide and deep realisation on a national scale that this is the unfinished task which he has left for this generation and if it is unequal to it, the crisis in the country will remain unresolved and lead to many crises of even greater magnitude and gravity, and, may be, disintegration.

Jawaharlal was aware of the importance of class force in the economy and referred to it on many occasions. Princes, landlords, 'kings of industry' referred to above were from his standpoint anti-people and reduction of their power was for him a prime necessity for growth and change. But it is a fact that with the passage of time, his emphasis on class forces was shifted and he, under the influence of Gandhian outlook, even acquired a mild bias against class interpretation of events and economic strategy. The workers and peasants remained an object of solicitude for him and various measures were taken in their interest and for their benefit, but generally speaking emphasis was on harmony, production as primary good in itself and the welfare of all—the Sarvodaya concept—and not so much on the submerged masses and the need for mobilising them for their good and realisation of socialism. Non-violence and class approach came to be regarded as mutually incompatible, though right up to the end he continued to stress the fact that political democracy without social democracy could have no meaning for the people and social democracy meant not only equality, equality of opportunity, participation of the workers and peasants in formulation and administration of policies, but also in the working and management of the economy as a whole. The measures like the workers' participation in industrial management and planning at the village level, panchayats and cooperatives, however, remained ineffective and meaningless and the basic institutions under Panchayati

Raj became merely a means through which rural oligarchies consolidated their power, according to all accounts appropriated most of the benefits of development expenditure and by and large the economy at the village level even became more and not less hierarchical and undermined the very foundations of political democracy.

The only way in which the process could be checked and reversed was to create centres of countervailing power and generate forces through which money-power in rural economy could be neutralised and tamed. This, however, would have meant giving due place to class concept in planning and the execution of plans. This approach, which Jawaharlal in earlier years, had assimilated and was clearly sympathetic to was greatly bedimmed by his allegiance to the memory of Gandhi and pre-occupation with somewhat sterile means and ends controversy without clear understanding of the bearing of this issue on the problem of planning in theory and practice. The conclusive implication of this issue on planning was that measures had to be devised by which centres and instruments of countervailing power could be consciously built into the economy and used effectively against 'the cumulative process', referred to above, by which not only the rich became richer but became more powerful through development processes. That this was happening was fully supported by all available evidence, and though the fact was admitted and deplored by him, the need for taking planned action to put a stop to the increasing polarisation of the economy and its serious distortion was not at all understood, much less acted upon. In 1934 Jawaharlal wrote, "naturally efforts must be made to win over those who profit by the existing system, but it is highly unlikely that any large percentage of them will be converted." The Congress has been in power since independence but it has under Jawaharlal compromised with vested interests in industry, trade and even agriculture in spite of agrarian reforms. "To compromise with these vested interests would be," wrote Jawaharlal in 1934, "a gross betrayal." His conviction remained unchanged, and yet owing to persistent resistance of those "who profit by the existing system", all key positions are still in their hands and are being used for their own benefit and frustration of advance towards socialism. Importance of class factor and its bearing on planning was a part of Jawaharlal's overall

approach in the first flush of enthusiasm for planning; and in spite of lapses and aberrations, it has to be made an essential part of planning by which rectification of the errors and deviation of the last 15 years is seriously undertaken.

One contradiction of which Jawaharlal was keenly aware was the contradiction between large-scale organised industry with modern technique and village and small industries. He was all for the use of the latest science and technique in industry and knew that in basic industries and transportation there was no escape from the fullest possible use of modern technology and it was necessary and desirable to make use of it to the utmost degree. Our steel mills, heavy engineering industries, etc., in regard to which we have made, in spite of many mistakes, very significant progress, mostly with Soviet help are an expression of Jawaharlal's ardent faith in modern technology. And yet he knew that the enormous idle man-power in the country could not be used in modern industries and as agriculture was already over-manned heavily—i.e. labour power in it could be greatly reduced without reducing production, he supported khadi and village industries before independence and they have been very heavily subsidised since independence. In spite of this heavy cost these subsidised industries have not been able to make any material impact on its growth or employment. He, however, continued to cherish the belief that both could and should co-exist and several experiments like integrated development schemes *gram ekai* and rural industries projects have been tried at a high cost, but unfortunately all of them have failed and two of them are now being continued in spite of the clear lesson of experience. That modern industries are absolutely essential and have to be developed, was for Jawaharlal an indisputable fact. And yet it was also an equally indisputable fact for him that they could not utilise the enormous man-power of this country and were therefore incapable of solving the most fundamental problem of Indian economy. Decentralised rural industries were rightly for him as inescapable as organised modern industries for the development of our economy. Jawaharlal knew that from human standpoint decentralised industries had to be developed and given a pivotal place in our plans.

This object could be realised only if the entire economy of the country is reorganised from base upwards—agriculture,

village industries, internal trade and even large industries become parts of the integrated regional plans in a system of concentric units with widening range according to the nature and type of economic activity. Mahatma Gandhi in the last stage of his life clearly affirmed that village industries could have a future only in a new social order and the whole economy of the country had to be built upon the basic unit in which the paramountcy of new social values was accepted. Even he did not quite work out the full implications of this approach. Jawaharlal apprehended its real significance but was not aware that without a real social revolution at the basic level, and therefore all through, the object of integrated development of agriculture, rural industries, trade and all other economic activities could not be achieved. The contradiction which Jawaharlal was fully aware of remains, and can be resolved if a new social structure, in which agriculture, rural industries, trade and prices can become part of an integral whole, is established by introducing the unavoidable consequential social changes. Decentralised industries in the new social context will not be relics of by-gone days but a presage and anticipation of the future. This contradiction has not been resolved and enormous resources have been wasted in disjointed efforts and without producing any significant results. The point, however, has to be realised that this integrated development has to be based upon modern and not antiquated techniques. Both in large scale and decentralised industries modern techniques have to be used but purposively adapted to conditions and circumstances. This is again an unfulfilled task of Jawaharlal.

Coexistence of large and decentralised industries is not a fad but becomes inevitable by the logic of basic facts of our economy. If, however, this coexistence has to become a viable fact of our economy, it is essential to exercise an effort of mind to realise its necessity and creatively provide for social innovations in the field of building the whole social superstructure on the foundation of integrated basic units with its own prime-movers, norms and modus operandi. This has not been conceived, what to speak of its being realised anywhere. In some communist countries there are departures which indicate a new sense of direction in this regard. But India has, however, to do its think-

ing, experimenting and planning and develop its own planning apparatus for achieving this very fundamental objective; but in spite of all the legitimate doubts which Jawaharlal had about Mahatma Gandhi's theories, he intuitively knew that his approach had a substance of fundamental truth in it. Its full meaning was not quite clear to him but he was fully convinced that the centralised and decentralised industries could and should coexist. If now we can resolve the contradiction through a truly dialectical process, in a synthesis at a higher level, all the confusion, waste and muddle-headedness which the problem of this coexistence has involved would, it may turn out, be worthwhile. It is a very important clue to our future and we should turn it to the best account. The crucial point, it may be repeated, is that this contradiction can be resolved only in the context of a real social revolution,—a point which Jawaharlal vaguely apprehended but implications of which he did not clearly or fully grasp. These implications still remain obscure to most of the planners and that is why the contradiction of coexistence of large-scale and basic village industries still remains unresolved, and the fact accounts for enormous waste of resources in vain attempt to resolve it in the context of the existing static conditions.

Jawaharlal stated clearly a short while before his death that implementation was the besetting weakness of planning in India. This view is generally accepted and the Morarji Desai Commission has been appointed to make recommendations for remedial action. The usual view that Indian bureaucracy is unimaginative, wooden and out of accord with the basic needs and objectives of our economy is widely shared, and yet hardly anything has been done to remove this fundamental weakness. The palliative measures taken in the last 15 years, as a parliamentary committee has lately pointed out, have resulted in the creation of committees and adoption of procedures which have produced no results whatsoever. In his *Autobiography* Jawaharlal had written, "Among those who have served in the I.C.S. or other Imperial services, there will be many Indians and foreigners, who will be necessary and welcome in the new order. But of one thing I am quite sure that no new order can be built up in India so long as the spirit of I.C.S. pervades our administration and our public services..

Therefore it seems to me that I.C.S and similar services must disappear completely before we can start real work on a new order." (emphasis added). Not only the I. C. S. has not disappeared since independence but its spirit still pervades the entire administration—it is as ever authoritarian power-hungry, tenacious of its privileges, status-conscious, exclusive and without any sense of history, and awareness of the imperative need of radical social change. It would not be unfair or factually wrong to attribute this failure to make even a start in building up the new social order, among other reasons, to the fact that our administration is still permeated thoroughly with the spirit of I.C.S. The successor service of I.A.S. and other similar services are completely imbued with this spirit, and as is well known, their interests are now inextricably interwoven with the whole fabric of big business in India and foreign countries and they are potentially one of the most reactionary and regressive factors in India. Nothing was done by Jawaharlal to act up to his conviction and understanding. Admittedly I.C.S. and similar services have played a positive role in the post-independence period and imported an element of stability to our administration. It is much more difficult to suggest what can be done to remove and even mitigate this cardinal defect. The matter has not received even thought or consideration. Jawaharlal even spoke ruefully of the spirit of gradation in which the services were steeped, and their inability to respond with their entire being to the great tasks ahead of the country and acquire and develop the crusading zeal without which, according to him, the challenge of these tasks could not be met. These services have found extraordinary opportunities of increasing their power, rising to undreamt of positions and occupied heights of decisive importance in all new institutions, undertakings and enterprises established in the last 15 years and, as stated above, developed close and most ominous relations with big business, Indian and foreign. They are not only playing a most crucial but also backward-looking role in our economy, administration and policy-making and in great crisis that may—really will—at any time arise they will not only impede the realisation of our most dearly cherished objectives but become instruments of creating most inhibiting and repressive conditions. Jawaharlal was fully aware of these

hazards and knew that futility of planning in India was in no small measure due to the services having become a formidable vested interest allied to anti-socialist forces in trade, industry and public life. This is another unfinished task Jawaharlal left for us and which he did not and could not come into grips with.

Jawaharlal rightly stressed again and again the importance of occupying and utilising strategic positions or commanding heights as positions of vantage for bringing a socially dynamic planned economy into action and using all its levers for developing a socialist economy. A number of nationalised institutions and undertakings, like the Reserve Bank of India, the State Bank of India, railways, airways and shipping services, basic public industries like steel mills, heavy-engineering undertakings, aircrafts-making factories and a number of other similar undertakings have been developed in the public sector, and given the will, they could be used as powerful instruments for shaping, developing and steering our entire economy and realising its potential. Apart from the fact that their internal organisation, relation with the workers, managerial personnel show no effort or capacity to conceive their functions as operative social engines of change and development, they are not being consciously and purposively operated to determine the direction, tempo and dynamics of the economy and the necessity of doing so in a co-ordinated and creative manner is not even understood. Really speaking if the commercial banks, internal and external trade could be nationalised, almost all the strategic heights and controls would be in the hands of the community and with social purpose and will they could be used effectively to develop a properly articulated planning mechanism which could be operated with very good results from the standpoint of a planned socialist economy. In spite of important measures of nationalisation and the development of basic industries, the need for these undertakings themselves functioning as organs of a planned socialist economy is not at all understood and it is, to repeat, not even formally admitted that their potential in this respect has to be used for revolutionary ends. Jawaharlal did know that commanding heights were to be in the hands of the community in order that the latter may in fact be able to command the direction, course and operation of the economy

and thereby enable the community to realise its objectives, common good and capacity for growth. But those who were and are in position of authority in the administration of these undertakings did not know that this could and should be done and did not share his understanding of what key positions meant and how they could be utilised from the standpoint of socialist planning.

The major points referred to above are the points in which Jawaharlal took special interest. There are two other major points in which he was necessarily very keenly interested i.e. planning apparatus and the relation of centralised to decentralised planning. In regard to both he was mainly guided by purely empirical consideration, but empiricism though inevitable at the beginning and up to a point, continued to determine policy, operation and decision on planning. The Planning Commission has demonstrated completely the inadequacy of its composition and working for the tasks of planning, has not evolved any criteria and procedures by which priorities can be established after careful examination of the issues and their relative importance, and planning on regional basis in an integrated manner without which planning can have no real meaning has no place in the scheme of planning. Even the kind of ill-assorted planning which exists at the centre is nonexistent at the state and lower levels and the necessary objectivity in thinking and action, which is essential for planning, has not been even attempted, much less acquired in theory and practice. The decentralised planning attempted through the Panchayati Raj exists only in name and has meant greater power for property interests at the local level and, of course, the resultant scramble for positions of authority which has had a corroding effect on already low standards of public service. The whole planning apparatus and procedure shows our badly attempted improvisation in the formulation and implementation of plans. The result is, what Guner Myrdal has called, functional anarchy and distortion of Indian economy and its unsatisfactory operation.

This, however, does not mean that planning itself has been a mistake and the view of the powerful Indian and foreign interests, who want us to abandon planning altogether, should not be resisted. It should be. What we need is not libera-

lisation of our regulative measure from the American point of view. The pressure which is being applied has a very disquieting political intent and has to be resisted with all our strength. But rationalisation of the planning mechanism and process from the socialist standpoint has to be resolutely undertaken and it has to be understood that it has a bearing on all vital aspects of our economy, and has to achieve integrity, coherence and consistency in theory and practice. Its bearing on the role of monetary policy in planning and implementation on industrialisation in all its aspects including rural industrialisation, on trade, cooperatives, population, resource operations and all other specific aspects needs to be thought about with extreme diligence and care if this bearing is to be clearly understood and made the basis for action. And above everything else, utmost thought has to be given in planning to the imperative necessity of changing the power pattern which in effect means the class structure of the country—an object which has been almost completely lost sight of, owing to confused thinking and violence versus non-violence. Yes, we have not only to continue planning but convert it into truly socialist planning by giving unqualified and fervent allegiance to socialism in our thinking and action.

This is what Jawaharlal did leaving no shadow of doubt in the last two or three years what planning had meant to him and this is what we owe to his memory and place in our national life in general and planning in particular. That planning was a dearly cherished object of Jawaharlal ever since he became chairman of the National Planning Committee is a fact which we have to be grateful to him for. He did a lot for it and the fact that he could not do more was due to our whole political and social context being adverse to planning. This context has become even more adverse to planning since his death and there are clear indications that balance of forces i.e. strength of anti-socialist interests and their capacity to use it to our detriment, has become much more unfavourable in planning. At present the pressure of U.S.A. is being exercised with greater determination to dismantle in effect planning in India and let blind forces of acquisitive society have free play. This pressure has to be set at naught by countervailing pressure and applied with ever greater determination. This is, to repeat,

what we owe to Jawaharlal and have to make planning an effective instrument of socialist revolution. This is a task which he has bequeathed to us and we have to accomplish it with all earnestness, sincerity and strength that we can command.

It has to be realised that in all socialist countries, with perhaps the exception of China, critical re-examination of the principles and process of planning is taking place and the question is being debated frankly and with increasing fulness of understanding. We have to follow this debate with intense interest and get whatever benefit we can out of it. The question like the rate of price mechanism in planning, the use of material incentive, decentralisation of planning without impairing the unity of central purpose, managerial responsibility and initiative, workers' participation in policy-making and economic administration and other major problems have forced themselves to the forefront of thinking and are having real impact on the theory and practice of planning. A similar debate suited to and arising from our own specific needs and problems has to be initiated and fully developed. The more clearly we are aware of the inadequacy of the meaning and achievements of planning in our country the greater our interest in and devotion to planning will have to be developed by us with unswerving loyalty to the spirit of Jawaharlal. This flexibility of thought and action meant in practice not unoften contradiction in planning and its virtual negation. But planning is really a social adventure in spirit. Critical rethinking that is going on in socialist countries is indicative of how it is being realised that there is need for a new pioneering zeal, willingness to learn the lessons of experience, and admitting even serious mistakes and deviations, taking the necessary corrective measures and forging ahead with even greater faith in the necessity and beneficence of planning. If all this has to be done in socialist countries, it has to be done even more thoroughly and with a clear purpose under our more unfavourable conditions. Our motto has to be, "Planning has failed in India. It must not fail". This should really be taken as the call of Jawaharlal and response to it has to come from within the depth of our being and with a true resurgence of social force.

REMINISCENCES AND NOTES

DINESH SINGH

As I sit down to write my reminiscences of Jawaharlal Nehru on foreign affairs, a flood of thoughts enters my mind and I do not know where to begin. The earliest recollection in this context is of 1945. Jawaharlal had just been released from prison and had come to Lucknow. We had invited him to tea at our house. I asked him if India would be independent soon. Not regarding it a casual question, he looked at me in all seriousness and said, "Yes, perhaps, free soon." I did not then fully understand the significance of freedom as compared to independence. Not many people do.

Later, as I began to work with Jawaharlal and understand him better, I realised that freedom from foreign rule was not in itself full independence. What he had meant was that although the Indian people would be able to drive out the foreign rulers, real independence for India would come only when India achieved equality with other independent countries of the world. This became the key note of Jawaharlal's foreign policy as also of his domestic policy.

India won her freedom in 1947. But India's foreign policy began to be shaped by Jawaharlal two decades earlier. Jawaharlal was an international man. He looked at India as a part of a bigger world and believed that the problems of India could not be isolated from the problems of the larger international community. For him the well-being and dignity of man was just as important in any part of Africa or Asia as it was in India. He looked upon the world as one inseparable whole consisting of various countries as different parts of it. The prosperity and progress of people in one part was just as necessary as that of the people in any other part and it could not be done at the cost of the other. This was the underlying current of his foreign policy and it helped to build his image as a world leader, loved and respected in all lands.

Although Jawaharlal started introducing a global concept

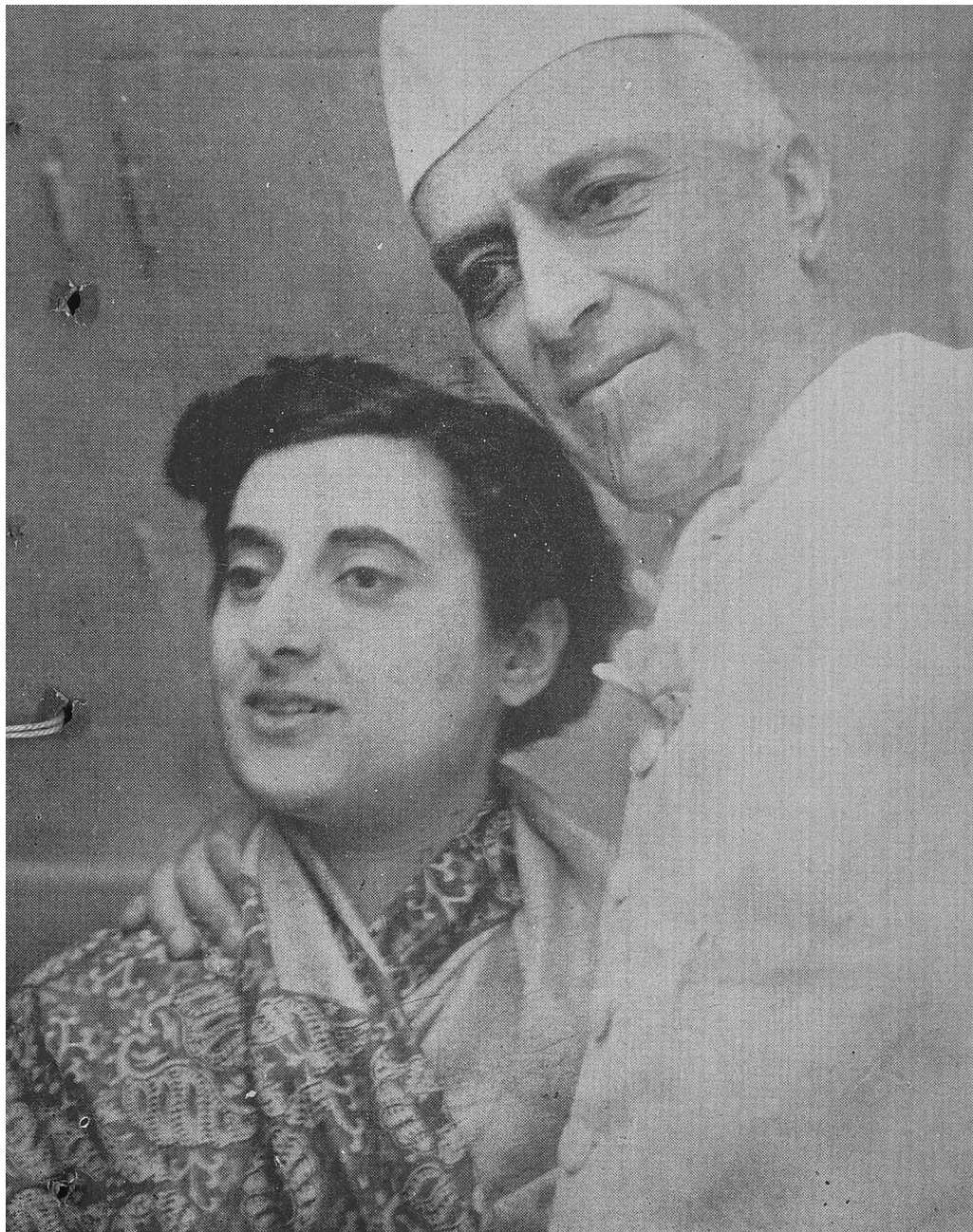
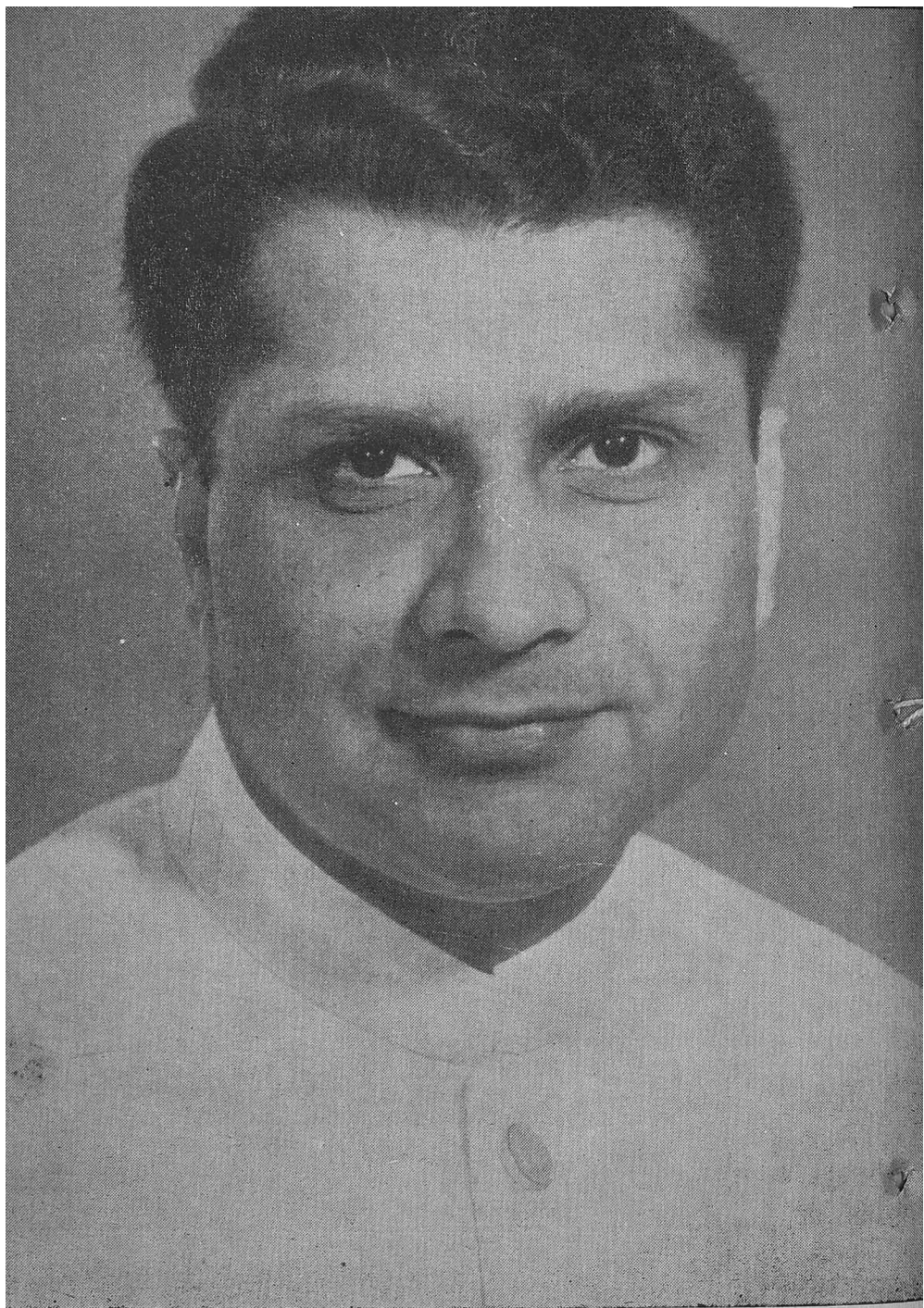


Photo by P. N. Sharma



Courtesy : PBI

in the policy of the Indian National Congress since he joined it, perhaps the realisation of the importance of international cooperation and world opinion came to him more fully when he attended the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities at Brussels in February 1927. It was here that he met many revolutionary leaders from Asia, Africa and Latin America. On the eve of the Conference, he issued a press statement which gave a clue to his thinking. He talked of the solidarity of the oppressed peoples. He condemned the use of troops from one colonial country to suppress nationalist movements in other countries under colonial rule. In urging the peoples of the countries under domination to unite, he appealed for cooperation in a world wide struggle against imperialism and colonialism.

In the Conference, he exposed colonial exploitation; brought to the notice of the world community the ways in which the colonial exploiters tended to divide the people and attempted to destroy their traditions and cultures so that the people would always have to look-up to them. The Conference gave birth to the League Against Imperialism and Jawaharlal was elected a member of the Executive Committee. In his report to the Indian National Congress on his return from Europe, Jawaharlal spoke of the importance of the Conference, the far-reaching results it would have and the need to maintain close links with international organisations.

With the beginnings made much before India's independence, it was not difficult for Jawaharlal to guide our foreign policy to work for the well-being of the world community at large in keeping with India's interests and consistent with her independence and national honour.

Sitting back in his chair after an informal meal and smoking a cigarette through a cigarette holder, he often spoke of the problems of the world as if they were his own problems. He was greatly pained at the racial discrimination practised in South Africa and rather shocked at the lack of response from some powerful countries, which often talked of the dignity and the rights of individuals in other parts of the world. He detested the hypocrisy and the double standards employed by them. For him these values were the same whether they were in South Africa or in Asia or in Europe or in America. They were indivisible. He felt that man has a universal personality and his

rights must be exercisable in every part of the world. Having suffered under colonial domination, he realised full well the meaning of colonial exploitation and the indignities it brought upon the people so dominated. He could understand the aspirations of the people struggling for independence and equality. In 1940, while recapitulating, he expressed these sentiments in the following words:

“The reaction of Spanish war on me indicated how, in my mind, the problem of India was tied up with other world problems. More and more I came to think that these separate problems, political or economic, in China, Abyssinia, Spain, Central Europe, India or elsewhere, were facets of one and the same world problem. As peace was said to be indivisible so also freedom was indivisible.”

Above all he believed that acquisition of freedom from foreign rule was not, in itself, complete independence; that complete independence meant equality—political and economic—in international dealings and non-interference in internal affairs. He realised that while a country remained under-developed and was largely dependent on other countries for its existence, freedom by itself could not be the ultimate goal. He was aware that foreign economic aid could have strings attached and these strings would gradually be tightened till the country either towed the line that was determined for it or the so-called aid would be stopped, making it extremely difficult for the government in a newly independent country to function. He talked, therefore, of aid without strings attached, of assistance that would strengthen the economies of the newly independent countries so that their people could, themselves, work for their prosperity rather than continue to depend on charity, with all its implications of external pressures and controls.

Achievement of equality with other nations and real independence necessarily implied the preservation of the freedom gained. To this end, Jawaharlal conceived of the concept of non-alignment and the Five Principles of Coexistence, which would govern relations between one country and another so that their peoples could live in freedom without interference from outside. These principles were accepted in the Afro-Asian Conference held in Bandung in 1955 and remain a tribute to a man who not only fought for the freedom of his country—and

the struggle was bitter—but also established these principles in his country in his finest hour of victory. In laying the foundation of independent India he ensured that there would be malice towards none and that everyone would have the opportunity to participate in the cooperative world of today and tomorrow.

Non-alignment is, unfortunately, a much maligned word. Its opponents associated it with neutralism, sitting on the fence, opportunism, taking advantage of both parties; one Foreign Minister of a leading world power pronounced it immoral. The supporters of the concept of non-alignment have also not always explained, in full, the ideas associated with this concept. It is generally regarded as a negative concept—something that operates by abdication, the desire of a country to keep out of the major power groups and conflicts. It is true that non-alignment implies keeping out of power blocs but it has never implied neutralism. Talking about non-alignment, Jawaharlal said, “When freedom is menaced, or justice threatened, or when aggression takes place, we cannot be and shall not be neutral. What we plead for, and endeavour to practise in our own imperfect way, is a binding faith in peace and an unfailing endeavour of thought and action to ensure it”.

If a country is aligned to a military bloc, and specially if in the association there is an outstandingly powerful country, then it loses its right of independent judgment and freedom of action. It is guided by the will of others. The country becomes a mere extension of the interests of one world power or the other. On the other hand, a non-aligned country retains full freedom to assess a situation on its merits and to act in keeping with the interests of its inhabitants. It is able to pursue its own foreign policy with self-respect. Non-alignment is thus synonymous with national independence.

Jawaharlal knew that non-alignment was based on peaceful coexistence. Unless countries had the assurance that there would be no interference in their domestic affairs and that their territorial integrity would be preserved, they would not be able to remain non-aligned and would gradually move towards foreign assistance to preserve their independence. He, therefore, advocated the abandonment of the use of force to settle disputes between countries. He believed that if countries were pledged not to use force to settle disputes, they would have to

use reason. They would have to build up public opinion. All this would generate greater understanding and appreciation of each other's points of view, in which a solution of the dispute would be possible without conflict. This alone would create a climate in which all countries—large and small—would be equal. Jawaharlal often talked of the Buddha's concept of victory in which there was no defeat—settlement based on understanding and accommodation.

What really pained him most was the blow to non-alignment by China. At a time when non-alignment was beginning to be understood and appreciated as a positive factor in lessening world tension, China stooped in an attempt to destroy it. Jawaharlal was always aware of the possibility of the revival of Chinese expansionism and knew that the first attempt would be to discredit non-alignment and all that India stood for. He had, however, hoped that China's association in the world community might be a restraining influence. He made every effort to draw China into the world community and gave lead to it by sponsoring China in the Afro-Asian community at Bandung.

Unfortunately, China was never fully accepted in the community of nations and her chauvinism continued to grow rapidly. Jawaharlal was conscious of China's growing hostility towards India, but he did not want to give up even before the battle had begun. He did not want to abandon India's efforts for economic betterment to meet the Chinese on grounds of their choosing. He did not want to rush into military alliances. He wanted to rely on the people to defend their freedom and territorial integrity. He did not want to abandon one part of the country to defend another. He wanted to defend all of India.

As I sat behind him in Parliament and watched him fight tenaciously, I was reminded of a speech he made in the Constituent Assembly of India in March, 1948 wherein he had said:

"We are not citizens of a weak or mean country and I think it is foolish for us to get frightened, even from a military point of view, of the greatest of the powers today. Not that I delude myself about what can happen to us if a great power in a military sense goes against us ; I have no doubt it can injure us. But after all in the past, as a national movement, we opposed one of the greatest of world powers. We opposed it in a particular way and in a large measure succeeded in that way, and I have no

doubt that if the worst comes to the worst—and in a military sense we cannot meet these great powers—it is far better for us to fight in our own way than submit to them and lose all the ideals we have.

“Let us not be frightened too much of the military might of this or that group. I am not frightened and I want to tell the world on behalf of this country that we are not frightened.”

The days that followed were nerve shattering. He had to strain every nerve to defend what he believed in the face of bitter attack—often personal—not only from the members of the Opposition but also from some of his own partymen. Some critics played greatly on the emotions of the people, talked of the abdication of duty by the Government, the weak policy of Nehru, his appeasement of the adversary and his inability to meet the challenge. It was also claimed that non-aligned India had no friends in the whole world. They conveniently refused to acknowledge that only two or three countries in the world supported China while the rest either supported or sympathised with India. Jawaharlal braved it all; yet he retained his humility and sense of humour. His consideration for his colleagues remained unaltered. I remember I was sent to the airport to receive Sheikh Abdullah on his first visit to Delhi after being released from prison in April, 1964. This was severely criticised in Parliament. When the matter came up one afternoon Jawaharlal was not feeling too well, yet he came to Lok Sabha to tell Members that what I had done was at his instance and he took full responsibility for it.

Even at the height of these conflicts, Jawaharlal remained intensely human. Sometimes the debates in Parliament lasted all day without leaving him time to go home for lunch. He would then send for some food and eat hurriedly in his office in Parliament. On occasions he would ask me to sit-in while he went to eat. Always he would leave food for me and send me out from Parliament to eat it. I remember the first occasion vividly. Jawaharlal got up from his seat in Parliament and asked me if I had had my lunch. I said I hadn't. He then asked me if I could wait in the House till he returned. When he returned he enquired whether I would get some lunch in the Parliament restaurant at that late hour and I said I would manage. He then said rather apologetically that he had kept some food aside from his lunch but he did not think that it would be enough for me.

He was a very austere eater and did not like to waste anything; so only a small quantity of food used to come for him in a very small food box. He had, however, very carefully taken out only a half. I noticed that he had even left half an apple.

It is this idea of sharing things that brought out the spirit of cooperation with which he fired the whole Afro-Asian community and today the idea has traversed the Atlantic to associate Latin American countries, too. Actually, technical and economic cooperation is no longer limited to the group of developing countries but is growing in many directions, bilaterally between individual countries both developing and developed and multilaterally between the groups of industrially advanced countries and those still at the early stages of industrialisation. It has also broken ideological barriers and countries belonging to one bloc or the other are not only helping non-aligned countries but also wanting to help countries in opposite camps. With the glaring exception of China, which blatantly attempts to use economic assistance only to further her narrow national interests, other countries are generally cooperating to help one another in line with Jawaharlal's thinking that poverty, ignorance and disease are just as bad wherever they may be and must be wiped out quickly.

Jawaharlal's greatest contribution to humanity is in his untiring efforts to establish everlasting peace. From the early days of his fight for India's freedom he was devoted to certain ideals and he valued them more than anything else. His heroic struggle for the independence of his country did not distract him from humanism and internationalism. He maintained a broad vision and put into practice Mahatma Gandhi's concept of nationalism which the Mahatma had described as:

"My idea of nationalism is that my country may become free, that if need be the whole of the country may die, so that human race may live."

Jawaharlal had, himself, acknowledged:

"This wider interest in international affairs helped to raise our own national struggle to a higher level and to lessen somewhat the narrowness which is always a feature of nationalism."

Jawaharlal had an abiding faith in the United Nations and spared no effort to strengthen it. His reference to the United Nations the case of Pakistan's aggression into the Indian state of

Jammu and Kashmir and his persistent hope in UN being able to find a peaceful solution annoyed many and gave his critics a handy tool to strike at him on every occasion. Yet he went on implementing the resolutions of UN despite Pakistan's intransigencies in the belief that justice would prevail and good institutions however weak must be strengthened.

Pakistan was Jawaharlal's greatest disappointment. It was the negation of all he stood for. It was created on the basis of religious intolerance by colonial rulers as a by-product of imperialism in collaboration with a small group of people who had made no contribution to the nationalist struggle for independence. Pakistani leaders' sole policy has been to do the opposite of what India did. They set up a theocratic dictatorship when India established a secular democracy. In India all citizens were given complete equality. In Pakistan special privileges were reserved for one community. India adopted a system of provincial autonomy. Pakistan went in for a centralised system of administration. India became a democracy where people's will is supreme. Pakistan, which consists of similar people as in India, adopted a system of guided democracy where the rulers arrogated to themselves the right to guide the people. Even in foreign affairs, as India adopted the concept of non-alignment Pakistan rushed into military alliances under CENTO and SEATO. India accepted the five principles of coexistence and pledged itself to peaceful settlement of disputes. Pakistan twice used military forces against India to force a solution of Kashmir in her favour.

Yet Jawaharlal was not against Pakistan. He had a special consideration for the people of Pakistan, who had to bear all this misfortune. Despite Pakistan's intransigencies he stuck to the promises and agreements made. He was even generous as can be seen in the agreement on waters of the Indus basin.

I worked with Jawaharlal in 1948 at a time when passions were high, when religious fanaticism was at its worst and when one had to listen to the heart-breaking accounts of the plight of refugees. Nehru remained cool, collected and firm. All citizens of India, irrespective of their religion, were entitled to the protection of law and the enjoyment of their properties. This he made sure was not just an empty slogan but a reality. Even when

Mahatma Gandhi fell victim to the religious frenzy of a maniac Jawaharlal remained undaunted.

One morning a group of refugees from West Pakistan came with particularly moving stories of atrocities and inhuman treatment. All they wanted was to be settled in properties left by those who had gone to Pakistan. It was the easiest thing to say yes. But Jawaharlal took time out to sympathise with them for their sufferings and explained to them how retaliation was wrong and how they must proceed in a constitutional manner. It was an act of great courage to speak to them in this manner but he was utterly sincere and they understood him.

He even agreed to take back millions of Muslims who were misguided into going over to Pakistan immediately after the partition. Soon they realised that the home of Islam as the Pakistanis claimed it to be was after all not a home but a police station without any prospects and they wanted to return to their homes in India. This move was particularly unwelcome as Pakistanis were pushing all their minorities into India and feelings were high. They were extremely difficult days and Jawaharlal displayed super-human courage and devotion to duty to overcome the difficulties. I wonder how many people fully realise the contribution he made to preserve the ideals we all talk about and cherish today. How it could all be lost if he had just relented.

It is in the hope of strengthening institutions that would safeguard these values that Jawaharlal attached a special importance to United Nations and its agencies. I was in New York in 1960 as a member of our delegation to UN General Assembly when Jawaharlal went to United Nations for the last time. He landed in New York on a sunny afternoon in a very cheerful mood. He had many expectations. It was "all-star-show" to which all the world leaders had come and Jawaharlal was expecting a major move in favour of peace. He was soon to be disappointed. The power blocs were still strong and no one wanted to make any gesture which might reflect weakness. Finally, Jawaharlal came forward to take a bold step. Together with some four other non-aligned leaders he moved the Five-Power resolution requesting the leaders of the two Great Powers to meet immediately without any preconditions to renew their contacts. I know something of the consultations and prepara-

tions that went into it. I also saw later the manipulations that were made to defeat it. Nehru was terribly disappointed but did not lose hope. In one of the best parliamentary performances he hit back at those who were obstructing the resolution. Later, Prime Minister Menzies of Australia, who moved the amendment to kill the resolution admitted privately that it was one of the harshest parliamentary lashing he had ever received. The resolution was withdrawn but the point was won. A process of lessening of tension started.

Similarly, Jawaharlal's contribution to disarmament will always be remembered as a land-mark. His devoted efforts to use the power of atom for only peaceful purposes will go down in history as the greatest single contribution of any man to this noble cause. There can be no greater acknowledgement of it than Nehru's firm policy to use atomic energy for peaceful purposes only when India has had the capacity to produce nuclear weapons. He faced every criticism firmly even in the face of abuses hurled at him after the Chinese aggression on India. He was not only thinking of today and tomorrow but of the future. If the nuclear arms are to be banned and forsaken there should not be any more proliferation. The cycle had to be broken. The temptation had to be resisted for the good of all:

One can think of a thousand ways of describing what Nehru wanted the world to be. To my mind the best description can be found in the words of Poet Tagore:

*Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by
narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the
dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening
thought and action—
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.*

NEHRU—THE ANTI-FEUDAL CHAMPION

BIBHUTI MISHRA

My link with Jawaharlal Nehru from the very beginning, was based not only on having been comrades-in-arms in the common national struggle but on something richer. We both served our political apprenticeship under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership in the service of the peasantry. In the early twenties his base of operations was UP and the rural districts round about Allahabad, his home town. My base of work was my own home district of Champaran.

Under Mahatma Gandhi's direct leadership I had participated, day in and day out, in the historic satyagraha of the Champaran peasantry against the atrocities of the British indigo planters, and saw for myself the servility of the Indian feudals to the colonialist overlords.

Jawaharlal was far more educated and enlightened and his early campaign tours in the backward, poverty-stricken, big landlord dominated districts of Sultanpur and Pratapgarh and the like, led him to the conclusion that the atrocious feudal exploitation which he witnessed in all its nakedness was directly responsible for peasants' misery and that it was an integral part of the British colonial system. His knowledge of world revolutionary history enriched by his intimate political experience among the UP peasantry led him to the conclusion that the struggle for swaraj had also to be a struggle against the zamindari system which, buttressed by British overlords, oppressed the peasantry and that without awakening the peasant millions of India on the basis of anti-feudal struggle there could be no successful struggle for swaraj.

Jawaharlal, though the youngest in the then national leaders of India, was the first to grasp this historic truth. And this discovery helped to shape the course of the Indian freedom movement.

Whenever we met during the AICC or Congress sessions, young and enthusiastic as he was during the twenties, he spoke

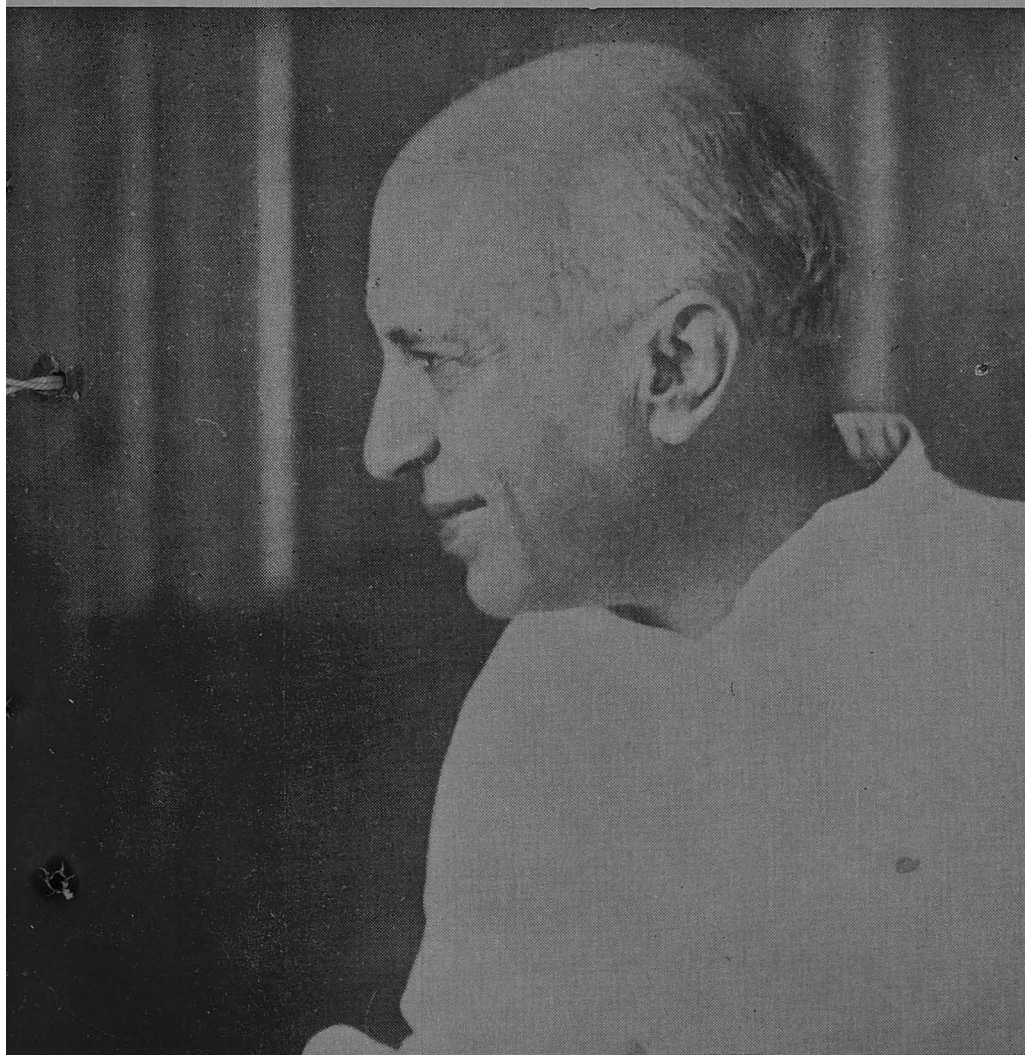
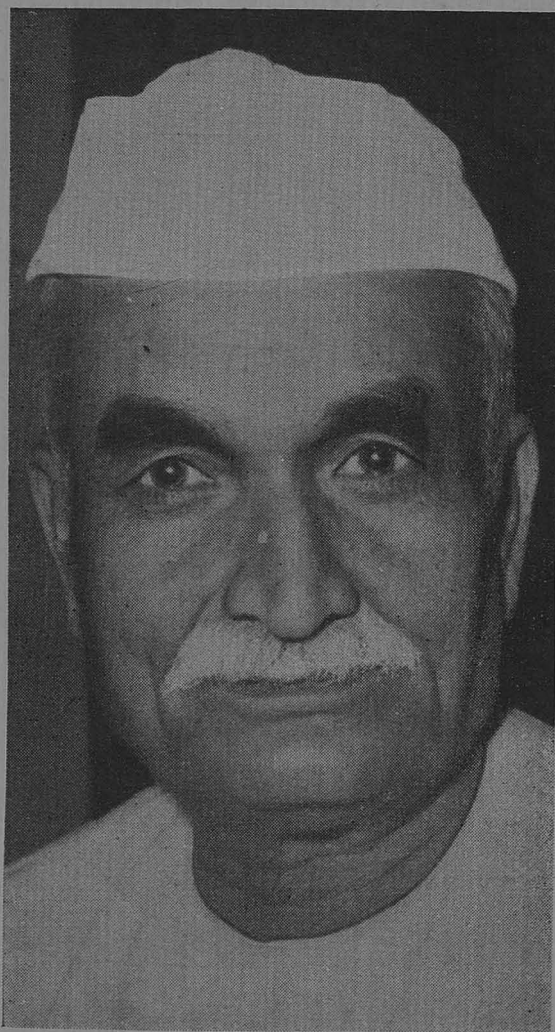


Photo by P. N. Sharma



Courtesy: LINK

in ecstatic terms about the Indian peasant. I have vivid memories of those early pioneering days. His favourite words were: *hamara kisan bahadur hai, tagara hai, samajh boojh wala hai, sirf theek rahanumai chahata hai*. (Our peasant is brave, strong, and full of earthy wisdom, he only demands good leadership.)

Those were the days when the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi dominated the scene. The Indian peasantry took to him as to a new Messiah. He had a prestige and status which the present generation can hardly imagine. Jawaharlal even in those days did not agree with the trusteeship theory and other social views of the Mahatma but with childlike adoration he admitted that it was under the Mahatma's leadership and guidance that the national movement was taken to the masses, above all the peasant masses. Congress cadres were encouraged to organise the struggles of the peasants against feudal atrocities and for the removal of their crying grievances.

I was far behind Jawaharlal in my social views then. The successful struggle of the Champaran peasantry against the British indigo planters had given new confidence to the peasantry of the whole district. Big Indian zamindars dominated the countryside in Champaran. Every year, on a large scale, they would eject tenants, and the task of Congressmen was to organise peasant resistance. The peasants had no right to dig a well, they could be ousted even from their homesteads.

After Gandhiji left Champaran and began operating on the national level, we, who had received our anti-feudal schooling under him, went on fighting for the peasants' just rights and never gave up the fight. In fact, this was the only job we did and our hands were always full. The big Ramnagar estate was our regular target. The small landlords were in the Congress. The Mahatma's own personal example in the Champaran satyagraha was the legacy that helped us keep these small zamindars neutralised in the peasant struggles against the big landlords.

So far as I can remember now, Jawaharlal came to Champaran for the first time between 1926 and 1928 to preside over the District Political Conference. He spoke on the problems facing the Champaran peasantry with intimate knowledge and deep feeling, he glorified as historic the role of the anti-indigo planters satyagraha under the Mahatma's leadership not only for Champaran but as the model for the rest of India. He used to

wear *dhoti-kurta* those days and not his later *churidar* and *sherwani*. His very first speech, unassuming manners, patent sincerity won him a place in the hearts of the peasantry of Champaran next only to Mahatma Gandhi.

The 1930 salt satyagraha, which was ushered in by the Mahatma's famous Dandi March, stirred Bihar into activity, as it did the rest of the country. Popular ingenuity was exercised to evolve numerous forms of picketing and keep the British on tenter-hooks. Bihar was No. 1 in the country so far as the number of satyagrahis in jail was concerned and the overwhelming majority of these were peasants of all ages. The British administration was thoroughly rattled. The British rulers never calculated that the simple call for salt satyagraha would go down so deep and stir the peasantry into action on such a vast scale.

We Congressmen, were looking for a new lead and direction from the Karachi session of the Congress. It was already widely known that Jawaharlal, inside the Working Committee, was already pleading and fighting for a new programmatic document. I had made all the preparations and even collected the cash to pay for the long journey but due to unavoidable reasons I could not go there.

The impact of the Karachi resolution on our minds was the same as of the Mahatma's example and teachings in the early twenties—soul-stirring, thought-provoking, forward-moving. All Congressmen, who were near the people, got a new vision and clarity. I personally felt that the Karachi resolution had generalised and systematised the practical experience gained by us in the popular and anti-feudal struggles in Champaran, as part of our humble contribution to the nation-wide anti-imperialist struggle. We got new strength to do our daily chores in the service of the peasantry around us.

The British rulers struck again when they realised that their repression during the salt satyagraha, instead of taming the Congress, had made it more militant. However, before the second round of civil disobedience started, Jawaharlal found time to visit Bihar for a campaign tour.

In the Champaran district a big rally was fixed for him at Motihari. I was to receive him as he entered our district at Raxaul. He was known to be an Englishman in some of his ways and food habits. We fixed up his breakfast and tea in the District Board

Dak Bungalow where there was a *khansamah*. As he was about to enter the train an old Congressman, Panditji, brought a big metal pot full of tea and offered it to him. Jawaharlal's first answer naturally was that he had had his tea already. Pandeji beseeched: "Now drink the poor Congressman's tea." Nehru drank it avidly and profusely thanked Pandeji.

As the train started he called me to account. "Why did you take me to the Dak Bungalow, why did you not tell me beforehand that Pandeji was to bring tea from his home, it was not only good but better than the *khansamah's* and above all it was from a comrade's own house." I felt guilty and thrilled.

It was a good gathering of Congress workers, supporters and peasant masses. Jawaharlal spoke simply but stirringly on the Independence Resolution of the Lahore Congress and on the economic programme of the Karachi Congress for people's welfare and above all in support of the just anti-feudal struggle of the peasants. Bihar kisans had already gained new practical experience and spiritual strength out of their experience in the salt satyagraha. Nehru's words brought new light to their eyes. They saw the way forward, of reliance on themselves and their own capacity to organise and keep up the good fight.

By the end of 1930 we had to organise a no-tax campaign in the three thanas of Champaran against the *chowkidari* tax and it uplifted peasant morale.

The impact of the second civil disobedience movement, following the earlier salt satyagraha, in which the peasantry of UP under the direct leadership of Jawaharlal and of the North-West Frontier Province under Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan took the most leading part. They heroically stood up to the terror, loot and gangsterism of the British police and armed forces. Their example had its inevitable impact on the patriotic people of Bihar and above all its peasantry. The anti-imperialist indignation of the peasantry got strengthened, the determination to drive out the British grew as never before.

The National Congress had no hesitation in roundly condemning and rejecting outright the British-imposed 1935 Constitution. However, after a long and tough internal debate it was decided to contest the elections, even though the franchise was restricted, and agree to form Ministries in the Provinces, even though the powers were restricted and the central government

remained in the hands of British civilians with a few hand-picked Indians thrown in, and under the overall autocratic command of the British Viceroy.

The Congress won the elections in all the states except Bengal and Punjab where it failed because of communal electorates, an imperialist disruptionist device. In all other provinces Congress leaders took charge by forming Congress ministries with the pledge to implement Congress policies to the extent possible, despite constitutional limitations.

The Bihar Tenancy Act passed under the first Congress ministry, on the whole, made the long overdue changes in the kisans' interests. The bulk of the kisans had occupancy rights but no right of sale. There were also large areas under the *batai* system (share-cropping). He now won the right to sell the land in case of need, right over trees and groves; and the forced increase in rents were declared null and void.

Congress influence over the peasantry got consolidated because of these reforms.

Those were the days when Congressmen and socialists and the newly arisen communists were forming kisan sabhas in other districts—with evident success in Monghyr and Gaya districts, for example. We, Congressmen, of Champaran did not feel the need to form a separate kisan sabha because ever since the satyagraha against the indigo planters we had functioned the district and local Congress units to serve the interests of kisans above all, and to fight for the removal of their grievances.

The Faizpur resolution was another landmark in the anti-feudal orientation of the Congress. It went ahead of the Karachi resolution, as the call of the times and the growing consciousness of the patriotic elements and above all the irrepressible urge of the peasantry demanded. Once again it was the handiwork of Jawaharlal. It had the same uplifting effect on Congress workers' minds as the Karachi resolution but on an advanced plane.

With the outbreak of the Second World War the Congress leadership displayed justified patience which British imperialists mistook to be bluff and bluster. It demanded from the British unqualified acceptance of India's right to self-determination and complete independence, corresponding changes in the existing set-up of the Indian administration, to enable the Congress to

rally the country and the people against the fascist aggressors. The British resorted to various stratagems and when they failed tried their last weapon, unprecedented provocation.

After the Mahatma's 'Do or Die' call at the August 1942 AICC session, even before the Congress had done anything, all Congress leaders from top to bottom were rounded up. The British Secretary of State for India, the notorious Amery, added fuel to the fire by declaring that the Congress was planning country-wide sabotage, cutting off railways and other means of communications and so on. The leaderless people thought all this was the actual Congress plan of action and did it with a vengeance !

Such a spontaneous and unorganised upsurge could not but get crushed by brutal repression which recalled the worst memories of 1857.

The mass of the people, however, were not cowed but only got more steeled, and the demand to throw out the British by any means and the sooner the better grew as never before. The consciousness and demands of the people went far ahead of the ideas and methods of the traditional leadership of the Congress. The only capital of the old leaders who dragged their feet was to swear by the Mahatma. Nehru emerged as the new, inspiring and rising leader of the nation. With the beginning of the post-war phase Gandhiji became deified as the Mahatma, became the Father of the Nation, and Nehru was hailed as the *Neta*, the leader and path-finder, during the last and final phase of the Indian struggle against British imperialism.

When the Cabinet Mission first came I remember very clearly what the peasants of Champaran thought on the basis of past experience: the British will concede some more reforms but not *Poorna Swaraj*. They were ready to resume the struggle if the negotiations failed. Every section of the Indian people had turned against British rule and even British officials realised it. The first seven days of the people's spontaneous upsurge after the arrest of Mahatma Gandhi and other national leaders on August 9, 1942, had paralysed the British administration throughout the province of Bihar which only ruthless military measures could cope with. 1942 and the rising temper of the people in the years following broke the confidence of British officialdom. After tortuous negotiations Indian independence was conceded but on the basis of

partition which produced a veritable fratricidal bloodbath, lasting a few months.

Jawaharlal, with the blessings of Mahatma Gandhi, and amidst the acclaim of the nation, became the Indian head of the Interim Government, and on 15 August 1947 the Prime Minister of the Indian Union. The best and most human qualities of the Nehru leadership were amply demonstrated in those anxious days when he successfully ensured that Indian independence was not drowned in blood, and fratricidal conflict was brought to an end, despite the deliberately provoked communal riots all over the land and Pakistani armed invasion of Kashmir.

As the situation settled down under his conscience-stirring leadership he gave his first thought to the welfare of the Indian peasant and the just solution of the agrarian problem. He saw to it that one of the first acts of the Congress after achievement of independence was the appointment of the J.C. Kumarappa Committee to study and make recommendations on the subject. The anti-feudal national tradition and solemn pledges to the Indian peasantry were a living reality in those early independence years. The Kumarappa Committee Report was very just and true to past pledges, pro-peasant and anti-feudal, which would have transformed the face of rural India, unleashed mass peasant initiative and carried the Indian revolution forward. The state governments were asked to implement its recommendations. At the state-level they were first diluted and later all progress halted.

Bihar was the first to introduce zamindari abolition legislation which did help to abolish the old feudal type of influence in the countryside. Bihar leaders like Dr. Rajendra Prasad, who soon after became the first Rashtrapati, Shree Krishna Sinha, who became the Chief Minister, and Anugraha Narayan Sinha, next important Bihar Minister, were all middle-class landlords. But with the advent of freedom and to garner its fruits all the big zamindars, who had not only remained out of the Congress in the past but had supported the British, came trooping into the Congress. The inevitable happened. The anti-feudal legislation got diluted, distorted and ultimately halted.

The successful negotiation and consolidation of independence and the abolition of zamindari, despite the weaknesses and limitations, gave the Congress a big majority in Parliament and in all the states. Jawaharlal came to Bihar for the 1952 election

Campaign. Lakhs came to listen to him. He frankly admitted that nothing much had been done for the people and the peasants in particular and his forthright honest self-criticism endeared him still more to the peasants.

I was also elected to the Lok Sabha from Champaran and had to meet Jawaharlal quite often over peasant demands. Once I went to him for sanctioning and speeding up the Gandak project. He asked me which should be taken up first, the Kosi or the Gandak, since there were not enough resources to take up two major projects for one state at the same time. I was non-plussed. He himself made a brief report on both, with masterly simplicity and clarity, which amazed me. His arguments for Kosi were better but my heart was set on Gandak. My only argument was that it would benefit Champaran, pioneer district in our national struggle which had remained very backward and poor. My appeal worked like magic and Jawaharlal passed orders on the spot that examination of the Gandak project be taken up.

I had to go to him quite often with schemes of small irrigation projects, which bureaucratic red-tape needlessly held up. Whenever the proposals I carried were concrete enough he always passed orders that they be expeditiously implemented.

Once I asked him to define socialism. He did so for my benefit. I pleaded that he repeat and elaborate it before the Congress Parliamentary Party general body. He readily agreed and did so with still greater effectiveness. I wanted to publish his speech but he argued: wait, don't hurry, let it sink in the mind of others.

During the second, 1957, general elections, he again came to campaign in Bihar. The Congress election manifesto was the basis of his speeches. Before multi-class audiences his speech was like a study-circle lecture meant to educate and enlighten on the problems before the country and their progressive solution. Before peasant audiences he was apologetic about the delay in land reforms and solemnly promised land to the tiller legislation soon after the elections. The kisans were impressed by his humility and the obvious sincerity of his pledge.

Avadi Congress had already cleared the main ideological hurdle by defining the shape of the social order that the National Congress, as the ruling party, sought to usher in—the socialist pattern of society.

The Nagpur session took place soon after the 1957 elections. And the leader kept his pledge to the peasantry. He personally drafted and piloted the famous Agrarian Resolution passed in the Nagpur session, on immediate fixation of ceiling on land holdings, vast network of service cooperatives and cooperative farming on a voluntary basis to transform the individual, small and inevitably backward system of farming.

Indian feudal reaction got its wind up, ganged up with monopoly and reactionary new-rich elements, sought the political leadership of reactionary, frustrated, cast-out leaders of the Congress and the Swatantra Party was born, to resist the line of advance outlined by Jawaharlal at Nagpur.

The big mistake of the Congress was that the ground was not prepared to implement the proposed radical measures of land reform. Thus they could be easily stalled instead of being effectively implemented. In the years following independence the composition of the Congress had seriously changed. As I have stated earlier, a lot of feudal elements had crawled inside it and the anti-feudal character of the Congress had become diluted. It had become a sort of *Khichri* (mixed gruel). A large number at the base and some in the leadership had retained their anti-feudal orientation but the new entrants had been admitted and planted straight into positions of power and influence. They did not speak up against Jawaharlal's Agrarian Resolution at the Nagpur Congress but adopted the tactic of silently and steadily working to sabotage its implementation.

Jawaharlal was enthusiastically for the immediate implementation of the Nagpur resolution. As Prime Minister he promptly issued a circular letter to all Chief Ministers to see to its early legislative enforcement.

The landlords as a class, all over the country, adopted delaying tactics, through the process of appealing to the judiciary. The Kerala, Gujarat and some other High Courts held against the ceiling legislation. This necessitated a constitutional amendment which Prime Minister readily agreed to introduce. At the Select Committee stage he regularly inquired about its fate. It however failed to get passed for want of proper attendance in the House. Some explained it away as an accident, others felt it was a reactionary design to ensure that the necessary number of Congress MPs were not present in the House at the time of count-

ing of votes. He felt both sad over the delay thus caused and angry over the irresponsibility displayed by his party members.

A special session of Parliament to last seven days, was summoned to get this constitutional amendment validating the ceiling legislation duly and properly passed. He breathed his last on the very day the final verdict of the House was to be taken. The amendment, so dear to his heart, was passed in that bereaved but momentous session, with the Swatantra Party opposing.

During the 1962 general election campaign, the third and last country-wide election campaign, Jawaharlal personally led boldly and militantly, popularised the Congress election manifesto, spoke sharply against feudalism and for socialism. During the election tours we Congress cadres could have him to ourselves, away from daily official and parliamentary routine as well as the bureaucratic atmosphere of New Delhi. When we pointed out the lapses of the Congress regimes and in the functioning of Congress organisation at various levels, he would answer back, with obvious anguish: "What can I do, I have to make the government and the Congress, as they are, work." We, who were close to him in spirit and for his proclaimed progressive policies saw for ourselves how sad he himself felt over it all. Some of his leading colleagues just did not keep pace with him and he did not want to break away. He feared it might lead to a worse calamity.

After 1962 he always concentrated his main fire against the Swatantra Party and hoped this would serve as a sharp warning to the pro-swatantra reactionary elements inside his own party.

PL 480 has become a permanent feature of our economy now, an escape from solving the food problem in terms of declared national policies. Jawaharlal himself was against perpetuating PL-480 the way it has been done. He was compelled to accept the first agreement out of dire necessity and never thought of it anything but a temporary short-term measure. PL 480 came up many times during our talks; he wanted to get rid of it as soon as possible.

During his last days he laid the greatest stress on providing land and water to the Indian peasantry to solve the food problem and create a sound base for solving all the major problems of

Indian economy and democracy. India is an agrarian country and industrial advance depends upon a sound modernised and growing agrarian base. The peasantry is the vast bulk of our people; its welfare is the biggest single factor in determining the shape and future of Indian democracy and its prospects.

He, therefore, along with the primary importance of land and water stressed the need for modernising Indian agriculture and providing the needed production boosting technical facilities to the peasants. He talked with glowing enthusiasm about educational facilities for the sons of kisans. His dream was to provide free compulsory education at least up to the high school standard for all youngsters.

Whenever I met him he would always ask, with evident deep interest, how far land reforms were being carried out, how far new agricultural techniques and tools were being adopted, how fast new schools and hospitals were being opened in Champaran, so dear and near to his heart.

I cannot close these reminiscences without mentioning two incidents which moved me deeply.

Once he took me and Ranbir Singh, now a Punjab Minister, to the gigantic State Farm at Suratgarh, set up with the generous friendly gift of modern farm-machinery from the USSR. He felt happy as a child, going from one unit to another, in that vast place. We were also excited. He talked enthusiastically of setting up similar big state farms in every state as the requisite land and adequate water facilities became available. To him such state farms were the shortest cut to modernising Indian agriculture by providing the peasantry good seeds and help all technical facilities for such or smaller farms to half achieving food self-sufficiency. He looked forward to Suratgarhs to inspire the individual farmer.

As we came back to Palam airport in New Delhi, the chivalrous part of his nature came into play. He rushed off to look after the Swiss Ambassador's wife who was waiting all alone in a corner. Later he saw us both going towards the taxi-stand and called us back and asked us to get into his car and left us at our flats. Such was his comradely behaviour to all who were near him. His parting words to us were; "When you go home to your villages grow Suratgarh-type wheat and

corn in your land and see the difference between production in land with water and without water and report to me or just send a note."

I became an MP in the very first general election and have retained my seat from Champaran ever since. I repeatedly invited him to visit Champaran. But he was very busy with so many other urgent problems. I went on repeating my invitation every year. At last he said: "You are right, for years I have not visited Champaran. I must come." He fixed the date but then he got the attack at Bhubaneswar.

I dared not repeat the invitation knowing the state of his health. As he felt better he himself reminded me of his promise to visit Champaran. He came to the Bhainsalotan Barrage in Champaran district and said to the assembled peasants, happy with the barrage but worried about his health: "I have fulfilled my promise to Mishraji and you all". I answered on behalf of all present: "Make your health normal and it will make us happier still."

Jawaharlal is no more. What is the legacy he has left behind for the solution of the yet unsolved agrarian problem and the welfare of the Indian peasantry which has yet to be achieved?

First and foremost, he was against feudalism, in any new form or shape. He was for progressive land reforms, land to the tiller and the landless.

Secondly, service cooperatives leading to the cooperative way of farming was his way for changing the very structure of our backward, sluggish rural economy.

Thirdly, he was all for increasing agricultural production with the help of modern technological aids and facilities. He personally followed new scientific innovations of help to our agriculture as it was. Once he talked to me of how a scientist in Lucknow had discovered a method to renovate saline lands which had been internationally hailed, and asked me to go and have a look at the tests being made.

Fourthly, he was dead-set against appeasing the big landlords when they demanded compensation according to the market value of land. He rebuffed them even after some High Court judgements went in their favour and insisted on the introduction of a new constitutional amendment to which I have already referred.

Fifthly, to Jawaharlal land reforms were primary and he had no doubt that on their basis alone modern technological aids could be effectively applied and thus benefit not the few rich but the mass of peasantry. This is of particular interest now when land reforms are being put in cold storage and all the concentration is on technological inputs.

How is it that Nehru's progressive agrarian ideas were not effectively carried out under his own regime and now his legacy is being merely worshipped rather than solemnly implemented ?

I have already said that the Congress which was flamingly anti-feudal and passionately pro-peasant before independence became *Khichri* after independence, with the entry of landlords who occupy high and strategic places in the state's legislative and ministerial set-up. This has weakened the spirit of the Congress and paralysed it.

The leadership and organisation of the Congress as of all other national anti-feudal parties, the socialist and communist parties included, have no real living contact with the peasantry. Their leadership comes from the English-knowing urban middle class and parliamentary life keeps their leaders safely confined to New Delhi and the state capitals. Their way of life, food, clothes and even language is alien and can never endear them to the peasant; they are living on their past achievements when they lived and functioned differently, rousing and organising the peasantry against imperialism. They were the days of *tyaga* (sacrifice) and it naturally took them to the peasantry. The post-independence period seems to have become one of *Bhog* (enjoyment) and they have inevitably come isolated from the peasantry. Thus it is that there is no organised nation-wide pressure to get the national anti-feudal legacy effectively and successfully implemented.

The future of our country is dark indeed unless socialism is fought for and implemented in practice and the very first step in this direction is to complete the anti-feudal revolution through the peasantry itself.

There is yet time to act or else some form of dictatorship and a reactionary takeover is inevitable. The dark clouds are already visible on the horizon.

The key task is for all anti-feudal elements to unite to engage in constructive tasks that will fulfil the Nehru legacy and

prevent the unfinished Indian revolution being turned, step by step, towards counter-revolution.

It will be good for the cause if the Congress and other anti-feudal elements—the socialist and communist parties, select their candidates with this aim in view which is the common aim of us all, however much we may otherwise differ.

NEHRU AND THE PRESS

M. CHALAPATHI RAU

Jawaharlal Nehru came down like an Assyrian on the *National Herald* management on his return from Europe in 1938. He had reluctantly agreed to be chairman of the Board of Directors, after his unhappy experience in the twenties of the *Independent* with its too many managers and editors. In his wanderings in a growingly fascist Europe, sending fiercely anti-fascist articles from Budapest or Prague or some other centre of storm, he had been waiting expectantly for the first copies of the newspaper; he got smudged, shabby copies, with dim headlines and unreadable print, and he was angry about it. He was no less dissatisfied with the editing.

Among his first suggestions was that the managers should be sacked, that, apart from the day's news of the world, one page of the twelve-page newspaper should be daily devoted to foreign affairs. I was then a junior member of the staff, who was supposed to have joined on the writing side but had been drowned in the drudgery of sending down heaps of copy to the press in those hectic first days. But when nobody seemed to know how Jawaharlal's idea of a daily foreign page could be worked out, I was entrusted with the task.

Apart from providing occasional purple passages of writing, the purple standing out in the dull acres of anti-British propaganda, and still asked to feed most lino-machines, I had to produce the foreign page. From scattered cuttings sent from Krishna Menon's London office, of stray despatches, articles and maps, supplemented by my own efforts at cartography, I was to piece together in the page, day after day, working sometimes throughout the whole day till the early hours of next morning. But soon what was known as Page Nine acquired character and became the talk of the town. Each day I took up one country, one crisis, or one problem, but the theme was anti-fascist, and that provided continuity. And the page pleased Jawaharlal. At a staff meeting, which he addressed, he said

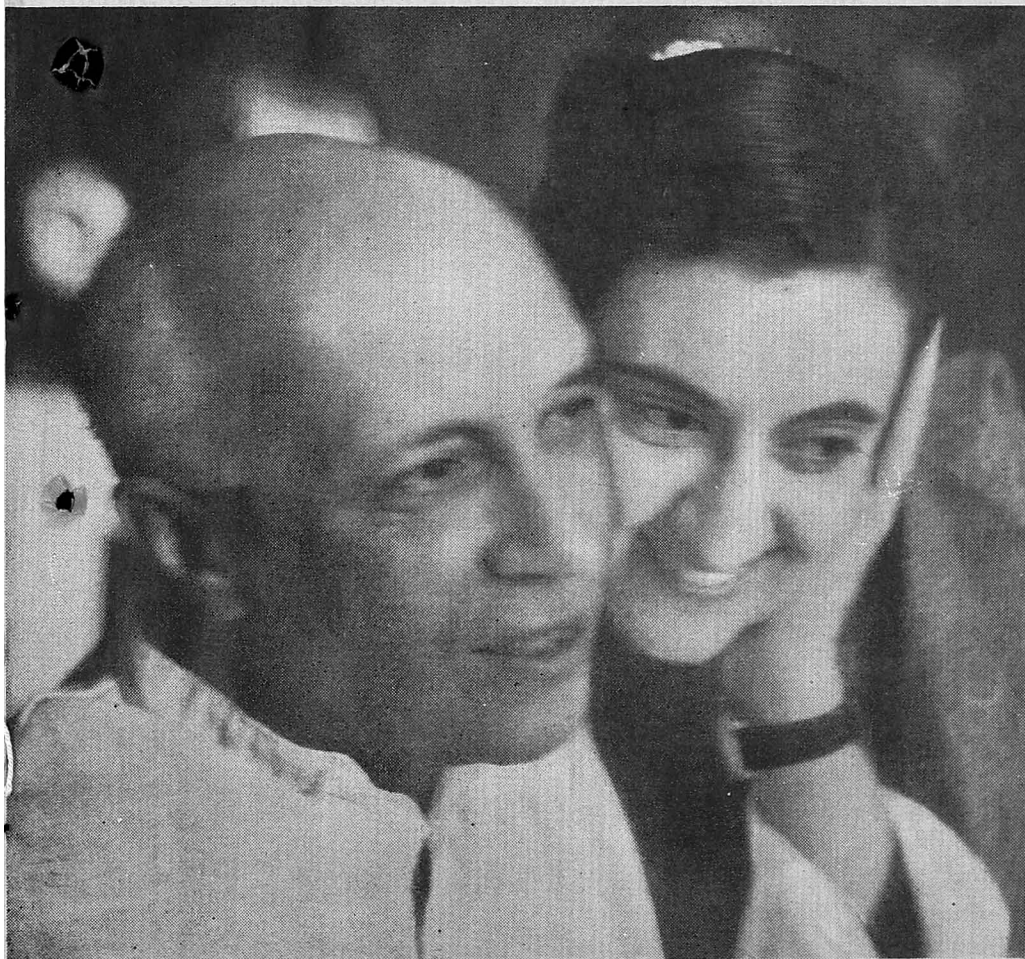


Photo by P. N. Sharma



there were only two good things in the newspaper, the despatches from London and Page Nine.

I had met Jawaharlal unIntroduced, on the day he was leaving for Europe, in Allahabad. I gave him reprints of my articles and he told me that, as he was leaving for Europe, I should go to Lucknow and meet people there. As he was leaving Anand Bhavan by car, I saw him going through my reprints. And he was to remember it, when he was dealing with my first resignation after a few months of Page Nine.

It was an august meeting of the Board of Directors, in a vast encircling room, into which I was ushered. I must have looked like a hockey player, in my striped khadi shirt, with sleeves rolled up.

"What are you ?" was one of the questions he put, with all the directors having a look at me. I did not know what he meant.

"B.A. ? M.A. ? or any other background ?" I explained I was "master" of most subjects except mathematics and would have been a member of the Indian Civil Service, if I had cared. The board was getting interested in my cocksureness.

"What are your predilections ?" was another question I remember. Again I did not understand.

"Do you want to devote yourself to writing or take interest in matters like news work and management ?" explained Jawaharlal and added, "I am told you are mainly interested in writing work."

I was not going to be a manager anywhere, I said, Nor was I a news hawk. If I was not wanted as a writer, I was prepared to leave the newspaper, I said.

"You know," said Jawaharlal, "people who take interest in the news and technical side and not merely write usually become editors." The prospect was exciting. I said I did not mind doing any amount of news work, but I must also write. Within two years, I could have become editor, but I had to forget those two years because of my loyalties and four years more because the newspaper was closed.

Jawaharlal asked me to send a telegram to the newspaper, which had wanted me, to say that I was not joining it. That was the beginning of a close association which enabled me to know him not only as a political leader but as a journalist,

and what was to be equally important, not only to know his political ideas but his ideas about journalism, from time to time.

There could be no more efficient or charming chairman of the Board of Directors; he was utterly free from commercial-mindedness and did not bother about money. This might not be the way to establish a newspaper, but he looked upon the *National Herald's* struggle as a part of the freedom struggle. He left the dreary means of finding money to Rafi Ahmad Kidwai and others. Both he and Kidwai wanted money but without strings. At one stage, he lost his temper with an industrialist, who was to become notorious later—they were all nationalists then—for being pompous with his share money, and wrote to him saying he did not care for his money, or persons of his kind.

He was keen on good editing and efficient management, but the newspaper's character and what it stood for were more important. To this end, he wrote for the *National Herald* incessantly. The early issues of the *National Herald* are littered with his articles, on national and international issues, and sometimes he wrote unsigned editorial articles which surprised me with their mastery of journalistic tricks. With each prison term, the articles stopped, and every time he was released, the trickle started again. The promised articles came in time, neatly typed or in his beautiful calligraphy. If he said he would send three articles by a certain time, they would all come unfailingly, and he rejected big offers of money from some newspapers, saying that he would write only for his newspaper, the *National Herald*.

There were the frequent restrictive orders, and I was asked by the editor to contact Jawaharlal on the phone and ask him for his instructions. One day, he asked me to read out the whole order banning news of individual satyagraha. He was at Allahabad. Could I meet him at Rae Bareilly after two days? There he took me from place to place and then talked till midnight of Vinoba and Gandhi and the Viceroy, of China, and of the exciting days ahead. The *National Herald* came last, and then he told me what we should try to do. It would be helpful if we could keep the newspaper alive, but we must never let down the flag. This combination of courage and caution was very difficult, but I was the main censor of the news-

paper and I had to carry out an exacting task. Then next day, Jawaharlal took me with him for a day's exciting tour of the villages of Pratapgarh and Sultanpur, and he saw me off, not knowing when we would meet again.

Almost every time we parted, we did not know when we would meet next, and it seemed a long goodbye. This time, however, he was in Lucknow about midnight straight from Barabanki, after a fortnight's further tour, and went straight to the *National Herald's* office, asked for a pad of paper from the sub-editors, and wrote an exquisite report of his own speech.

Next morning, I was astounded at the Barabanki correspondent's mastery of expression in English. I thought the editor had done or redone the report. The editor thought I had done it. It was beyond us both; there was a certain freshness about the report which was beyond any journalism. When we looked at the copy, we found it was in Jawaharlal's own hand-writing. When he came to the office that morning, he seemed pleased with the trick he had played on us.

Jawaharlal knew the nature of journalism, and though his books became best-sellers, he did no claim to be a writer. Writing to him was a part of self-expression as a man of action, and at his best, he gave it a literary touch, with his sense of rhythm. If journalism consists largely of the capacity to react and express, that reaction quickly and effectively, Jawaharlal, like Gandhi, was a great journalist. At times, he surprised us with his grasp of the mechanical and technical aspects of journalism too. One day he came straight from the railway station into the sub-editor's room and took objection to the way the lead story had been done. It was a statement by Subhas Bose, and the night sub-editor had given half a dozen headlines in bold type. "Is this not ugly ? Is it all necessary, this garish display ? I am not saying it because it is a statement of Subhas. He is my friend. But the *National Herald* should have dignity about it", he went on.

He was not without appreciation of the strong writing in which we indulged. But, he told the editor often, strong writing is not abusive writing; it can be simple and dignified and yet be strong. To the news side too, he applied high standards. He wanted us to get anti-official items given by Congressmen verified. But official sources would always contra-

dict the news, he was told. It did not matter; even official sources should be given a chance. If they gave their version, it should be published.

It was because we did not follow these high standards that the editor was exposed to criminal prosecution by Hallett's Government. The news item about lathi charges in prisons was one-sided, unverified, and a strong editorial article was based on a story which could not be substantiated. The prosecution was at the instance of the prison superintendent, but the Government were behind him. There were thoughts of publishing an apology, but from prison Jawaharlal wrote that the case must be fought, whatever happened to the editor, and if the editor was sent to prison, it would do him good. So, the editor went to prison, and we made a martyr of him.

Jawaharlal was in effect the chief editor of the paper, even when he was in prison. He not only insisted on standards but on correct policies, and at that time, the basis of policy was not only opposition to the British but opposition to fascism. It was a difficult combination for most journalists, who like most Congressmen could not help rejoicing over British defeats and Nazi victories in the early days. And there was always Jawaharlal's humanism. One day he came into my room and asked me what the latest news was and I casually mentioned that about twenty-five persons or so had been killed in a Nazi raid on London. "Only twenty-five killed," I must have said. "Is that not enough?" he said. I remember it as the greatest rebuke I have ever received in my life.

There were some ticklish problems for the directors and the editor, when differences arose between Gandhi and Jawaharlal and differences were developing between the Working Committee and Jawaharlal. In Delhi, Satyamurthi asked me whether we would follow the Working Committee or Jawaharlal. I was only an assistant editor then, and a director intervened to say that we would, of course, follow the Working Committee. I was not so certain.

Altogether, Jawaharlal played a dominant influence in the fortunes of the *National Herald* in the pre-independence days. The directors and editor were uncertain, but his objectives were firm. He wanted the *National Herald* to take risks, to publish and be damned, but it must also be kept alive. There

was no question of editorial independence for he himself worked as editor, and if anything appeared in the newspaper which seemed a deviation from his stand, he did not conceal his annoyance. But he took great interest in all aspects and it was exciting to share his sense of adventure. Whenever he was free, he wrote strongly against censors and the Government; and whenever there was a demand for security, he would make an appeal, and we got much more than the money we needed. There were lean days too, and in one spell, some of us had to live without salaries and then he would visit our chummery like a comrade and lunch or dine with us. We did not bother about the prospect, penury or prison. To work with him was enough.

The war was ending, Congress leaders were being released, and Jawaharlal was thinking ahead of the *National Herald*. The anti-British mood was still there, but he was scenting freedom, and the *National Herald* would soon have social responsibilities and a constructive role to play. This was difficult for some nationalist journalists, and more than ever, when the opportunity arose, he insisted on my being editor. I had left the *Hindustan Times* with prospects of going to London or Washington or Moscow or Djakarta, for my heart was in Lucknow and with the *National Herald*, but I was keen to wander about as a kind of John Gunther, and desperately I suggested the names of two well-known persons, then in India and still unemployed like him. One was to become High Commissioner, the other Ambassador soon. We lost Jawaharlal himself, for he became Prime Minister.

A Marwari millionaire, later to achieve great notoriety, made a strange offer to him through third persons. The millionaire offered a crore of rupees for Jawaharlal to start a chain of newspapers. Some of the directors were excited over the prospect and the editor saw the end of all our problems, but Jawaharlal had no hesitation in rejecting the suggestion outright. I was shocked at the millionaire's idea and relieved to find that Jawaharlal's idea of the future of the Indian press was once again identical with mine.

I was troubled over one matter and I discussed it with him when he called me to Allahabad for a talk before the *National Herald* was to re-start publication. "Almost all the newspapers are nationalist. They all write the same sort of thing now.

What then is to be the difference between the *National Herald* and the other nationalist newspapers?" I was suggesting that the *National Herald* should immediately advocate socialism. He appreciated my impatience, discussed socialists of various kinds, and told me I was free to shape policy as I liked. "Nobody will interfere with you. Not I. Not the editor." That was before I became editor, and when I became editor, he reaffirmed my freedom and scrupulously followed that policy. At Allahabad, he referred to another aspect, "There can be differences between one newspaper and others even in small matters. That is the test of character." I was later to appreciate his perspicacity, when I found that even in publishing or rejecting some small item of news, you can make a newspaper's character.

On July, 1, 1946, when I formally took over, Jawaharlal was in Lucknow and spent the whole day in the *National Herald* in the company of Krishna Menon. In the morning he addressed the staff and opened a discussion; in the evening he told me he would write two articles for me, one of them on the Constituent Assembly to be convened. I said I had just done one on the same subject. He said he wanted to look at the subject from a particular angle; I said I had done the same thing. He wanted to see the proofs of the article, and he took them home. I was rather nervous, because expecting him to come to the office any moment, I had dictated the article in haste. I was later to find he liked it and there was complete identity between what I said then on the subject and what he was to say in the coming days. He did not write an article on the Constituent Assembly.

Instead, he asked for a pad and wrote for me a fine article denouncing the American atom bomb test at Bikini. In the morning the Associated Press man had wanted an interview from him on the test; he refused. In the evening he probably changed his mind and expressed his indignation at American arrogance. The *National Herald* has published reproductions of the manuscript several times.

Still, he was writing for the *National Herald*. But when he formed the Interim Government, he stopped writing; he also resigned. Bhabha had to resign from several directorships; Jawaharlal told Wavell he was a director of one company

only, a non-profit-making one, and there was no need for him to resign from it, but he was resigning for the sake of propriety. When he announced it at a meeting of the board of directors, they urged him to stay on. I agreed with him and accepted his stand as fair and far-seeing. He emphasised the point he had in mind further. "I do not want to embarrass Chalapathi Rau and I do not want to be embarrassed by him". I agreed with this too. His interest in the *National Herald* remained; as he publicly said later, he liked to see it, in spite of the abundance of newspapers in Delhi, and he expected high standards from it.

One test he applied to the quality of newspapers : "If I have many newspapers before me, to which will I be attracted ? Which one will I pick up ?" Not only that, he followed newspapers with interest, patterns of ownership, which he held to be the crux of the matter, and patterns of policy. One day, as I was leaving him late at night, he sent for me and asked me why a weekly journal had changed its policy and its attitude towards him. I gave him some reasons, and he gave others, and he seemed to know more than I did about that journal.

In the old days, he would ask me about Pertinax and Madame Tabouis and other well-known European journalists, more to know how far I was acquainted with the foreign press than for anything else. Through the years, he would confide to me his impressions of Indian journals and journalists. About some editor, a hang-over of the pre-war years, Jawaharlal said that he could never edit a newspaper, that he wrote a column which that editor thought was funny but no one else did. A particular correspondent had disliked him from the days of the Lucknow Congress, and seemed never to like him. About a highly pontificating editor who wrote a column: "He is fond of scattering phrases, but for the life of me, I cannot follow what he is driving at." And so on.

Jawaharlal took so much interest in the press because both during the freedom struggle and after freedom he had high respect for the place of the press in national life. Freedom of the press was a part of the democratic process to him, and he accepted that criticism, even if it was strong and intolerant, was a part of it.

Thus, in the years before Avadi, when I was vehemently

criticising the Government's policies constantly, he was sometimes upset, but he would not tell me so, because he respected my freedom, even nursed and cherished it. He had his difficulties as Prime Minister and I had my responsibilities as editor, and he understood that an editor had to function freely, if he was to function effectively and; stamp the newspaper with character. Only he expected of the editor high standards.

He was constantly pestered with complaints from Congress men but he answered them himself, even when once a section of the U.P.C.C. executive raised an uproar against me or when Pandit Pant said that ninety per cent of his troubles were due to the *National Herald*. But all complaining ceased by 1950, and though I was often resigning, my resignation was never accepted.

Jawaharlal not only tolerated criticism but appreciated it, if the level was high; what upset him were malice, lack of dignity, or ignorance of history. But he upheld the principle of a free press even when he did not respect sections of the press for not being equal to the high standards he expected of them.

Jawaharlal addressed editors' gatherings several times and spoke with greater understanding of the problems of the press than they did. They talked of growth, but growth in what direction? What about the social responsibilities of the press, and how could it be responsible if it was predominantly owned by millionaires from Marwar?

For him freedom of the press consisted essentially of editorial freedom and not of freedom of the owner of the press. He disliked press barons and barons of all kinds and post-war developments in the Indian press oppressed him so much that he took interest in the appointment of the Press Commission. I saw on his table a copy of the report of the British Press Commission often in those days when he repeatedly challenged the foundations of the press in India. As President of the Federation of Working Journalists, I made the appointment of a Press Commission the theme of my presidential address at the Calcutta session in 1952. and got a resolution passed by the session demanding the appointment of a commission and suggesting the terms of reference, when no other organisation wanted such an inquiry. I forwarded the resolution to him before leaving for China as a member of the official delegation led by Mrs. Pandit.

There I was pleasantly surprised to learn that the President's Address to the new Parliament indicated the appointment of a Press Commission.

Jawaharlal took interest in the selection of the personnel and then followed closely the work of the commission, giving evidence, before it informally. If some of the commission's recommendations have not yet been carried out, it was not his fault. He provided a Bible for the press, and he was a constant chastiser of monopolies. He knew the set-up so well that at his press conferences, which were free-for-all affairs, he knew who was behind each questioner and what was behind each question. He never failed to inspire fear in the vested interests.

Jawaharlal was a passionate defender of press freedom, as a part of the larger freedom. He stood for tolerance, and there may be increasingly less of it. He stood for standards and values, and these may suffer gradually. He distrusted monopoly, and the monopolists are happy he is gone. He looked forward to mass circulations, but, like the Press Commission, he wanted the press to develop on the basis of democratic, widely diffused ownership.

For those interested in the legacy he left behind, there will be much in the heritage of values he left for the press.

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